TERROR

EC

TALES FROM THE CRYPT

NO. 28
FEB.-MAR.

10¢

FEATURING...

THE CRYPT-KEEPER

THE OLD WITCH

THE VAULT-KEEPER

FAMOUS 1950s EC COMICS!

TERROR

TALES FROM THE CRYPT®

NO. 12
JUNE

2.00
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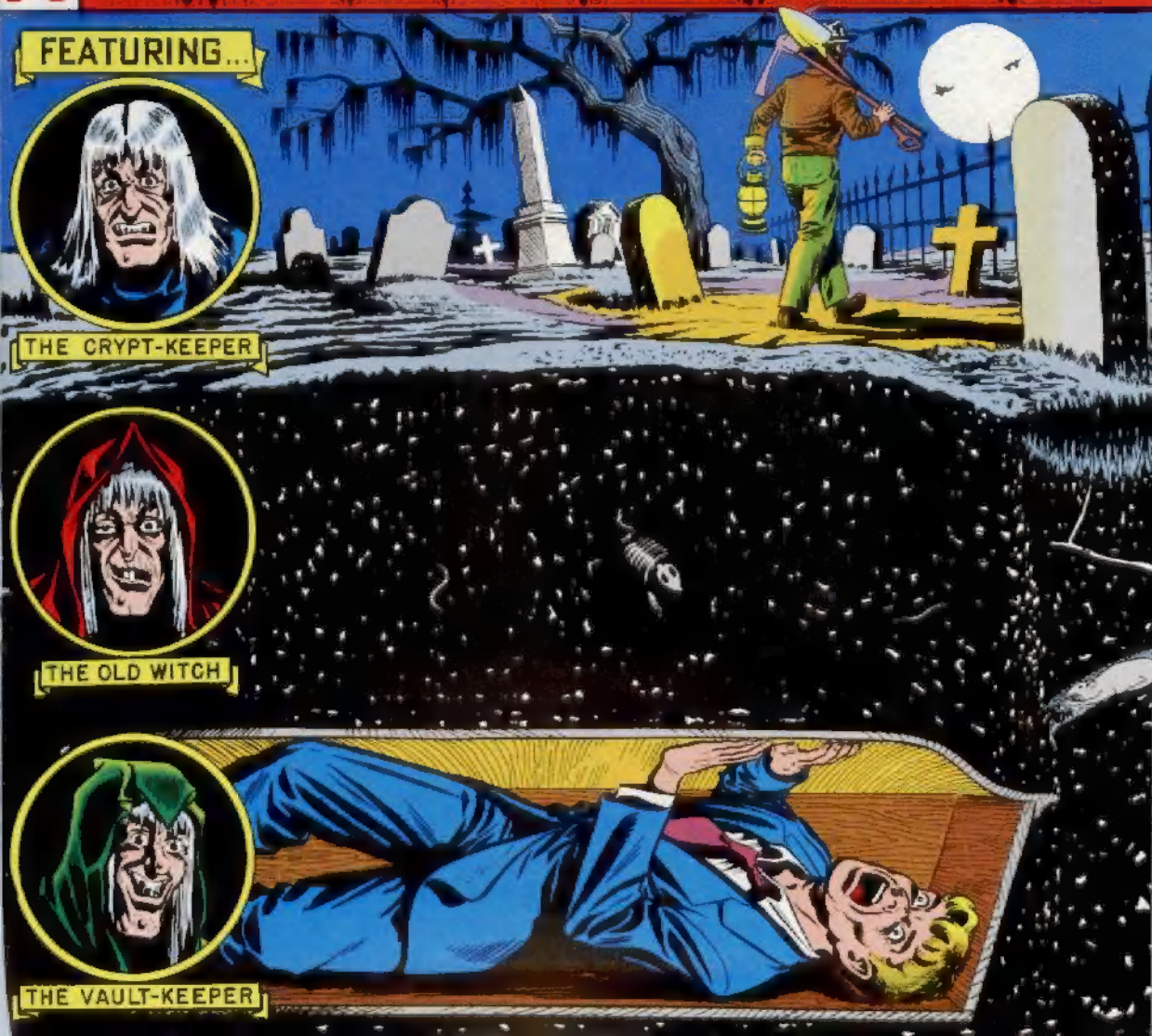
CANADA

FEATURING...

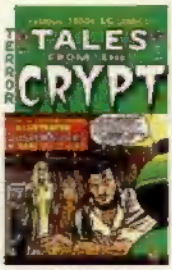


BACK ISSUES!!

THE COMIC YOU HOLD IN YOUR HANDS IS PART OF THE CHRONOLOGICAL, FACSIMILE REPRINTING OF THE **FAMOUS** (AND INFAMOUS!) **EC COMICS** LINE OF THE EARLY 1950s! WE STARTED WITH THE **FIRST ISSUE** OF EACH TITLE AND ARE ON OUR WAY TO THE **BITTER END!** GET ON THE BANDWAGON, AND **FILL IN THE GAPS** IN YOUR COLLECTION FROM THIS BACKLIST!!

CRYPT #1

CRYPT #2



CRYPT #3

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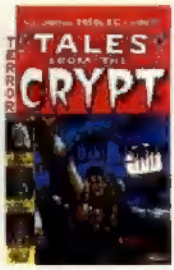
CRYPT #5



CRYPT #6

W SCI #1

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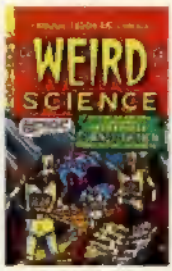

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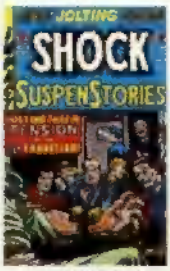

SHOCK #1

SHOCK #2

SHOCK #3

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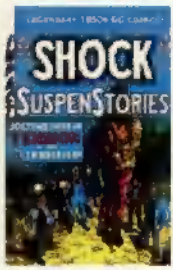

SHOCK #5

SHOCK #6

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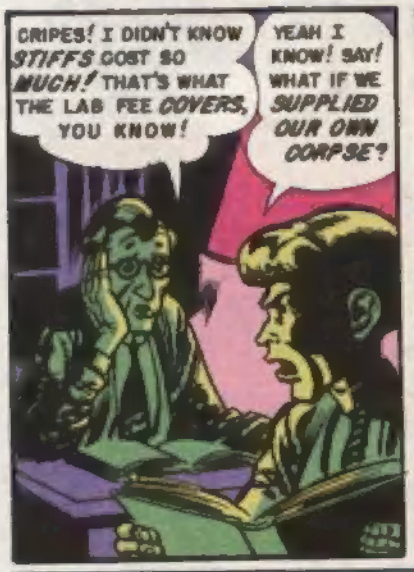
Tales from the Crypt (USPS 005808) Vol. 1, No 12, June 1995, published quarterly in September, December, March and June by Gemstone Publishing, 202 Aid, West Plains, MO 65775-3532. **Second-class postage paid at West Plains, MO.** Entire contents © 1995 by William M. Gaines, Agent, Inc. Tales from the Crypt #28 © 1951 by I.C. Publishing Co., Inc., re © 1979 by William M. Gaines, Agent, Inc. All rights reserved. Nothing herein contained may be reproduced without the written permission of William M. Gaines, New York, New York. Annual subscription rate $8 ($12 outside US payable in US funds). Printed in Canada. **Postmaster: send address changes to Tales from the Crypt, Russ Cochran, PO Box 469, West Plains, MO 65775-0469.**

THE CRYPT OF TERROR

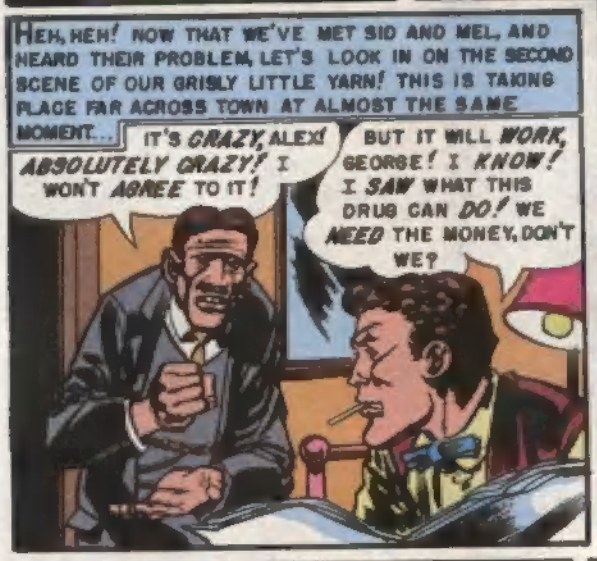
HEH, HEH! SO YOU'RE BACK FOR *MORE*, EH? CAN'T GET ENOUGH *HORROR*, EH? WELL, I'LL GIVE YOU YOUR *DIME'S WORTH* THIS TIME! YEP! IT'S *ME*... YOUR *HOST*... *THE CRYPT-KEEPER!* HMMM! WHAT *CHILLER* CAN I TELL YOU THAT WILL MAKE YOUR *BLOOD* RUN *COLD* AND THE *HAIR* ON YOUR NECK *CRAWL?* AHHH! I KNOW JUST THE ONE! THIS IS A *REAL SPINE-TINGLER!* I CALL IT... AFFECTIONATELY...

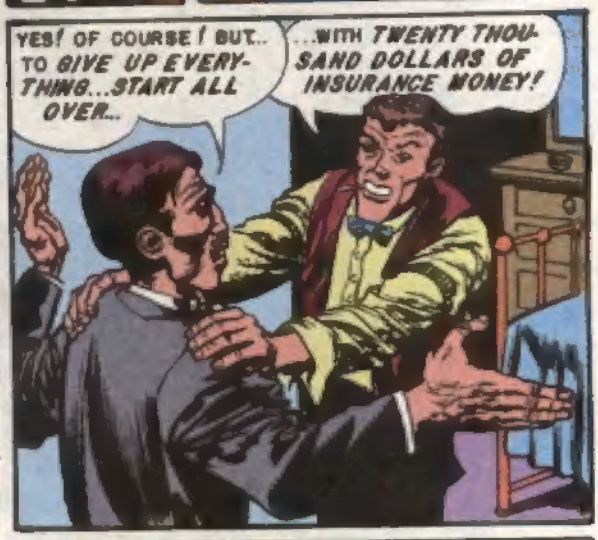
BARGAIN IN DEATH!

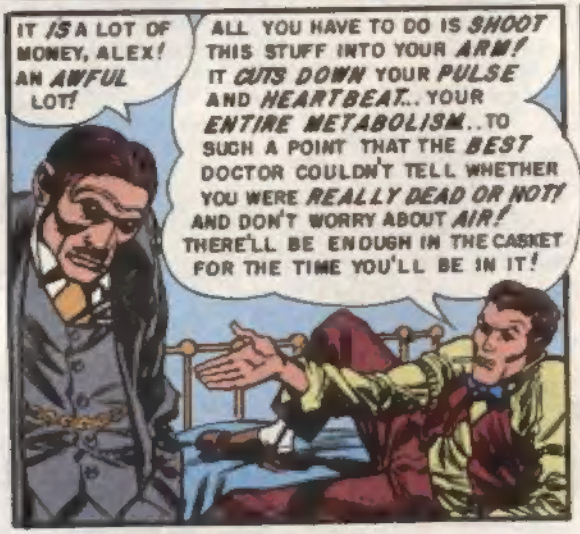

GRIPES! I DIDN'T KNOW STIFFS COST SO MUCH! THAT'S WHAT THE LAB FEE COVERS, YOU KNOW!
YEAH I KNOW! SAY! WHAT IF WE SUPPLIED OUR OWN CORPSE?

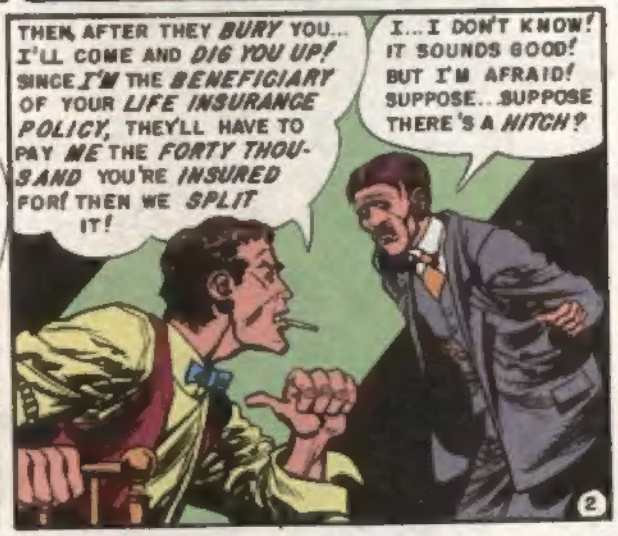
HUH? HOW? YOU.. YOU MEAN...
DON'T LOOK SHOCKED, SID! IT'S BEEN DONE BEFORE! WE JUST DIG UP A FRESH ONE IN THE TOWN CEMETERY!

STEAL A BODY? ROB A GRAVE?
EITHER THAT OR WE DON'T BECOME DOCTORS, SID! TAKE YOUR CHOICE!


HEH, HEH! NOW THAT WE'VE MET SID AND MEL, AND HEARD THEIR PROBLEM, LET'S LOOK IN ON THE SECOND SCENE OF OUR GRISLY LITTLE YARN! THIS IS TAKING PLACE FAR ACROSS TOWN AT ALMOST THE SAME MOMENT...
IT'S CRAZY, ALEX! ABSOLUTELY CRAZY! I WON'T AGREE TO IT!
BUT IT WILL WORK, GEORGE! I KNOW! I SAW WHAT THIS DRUG CAN DO! WE NEED THE MONEY, DON'T WE?

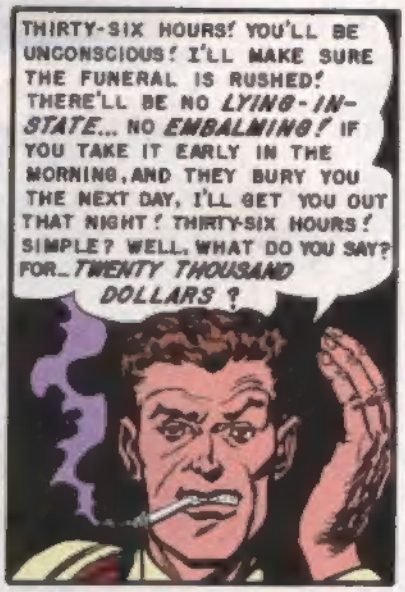

YES! OF COURSE! BUT.. TO GIVE UP EVERYTHING...START ALL OVER...
...WITH TWENTY THOUSAND DOLLARS OF INSURANCE MONEY!


IT IS A LOT OF MONEY, ALEX! AN AWFUL LOT!
ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS SHOOT THIS STUFF INTO YOUR ARM! IT CUTS DOWN YOUR PULSE AND HEARTBEAT... YOUR ENTIRE METABOLISM...TO SUCH A POINT THAT THE BEST DOCTOR COULDN'T TELL WHETHER YOU WERE REALLY DEAD OR NOT! AND DON'T WORRY ABOUT AIR! THERE'LL BE ENOUGH IN THE CASKET FOR THE TIME YOU'LL BE IN IT!

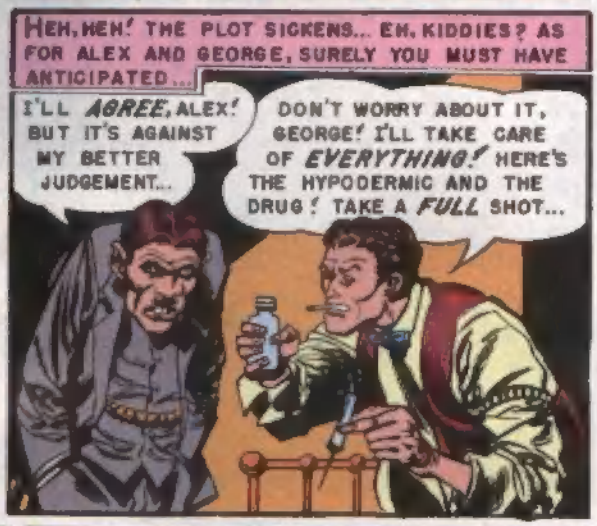

THEN, AFTER THEY BURY YOU... I'LL COME AND DIG YOU UP! SINCE I'M THE BENEFICIARY OF YOUR LIFE INSURANCE POLICY, THEY'LL HAVE TO PAY ME THE FORTY THOUSAND YOU'RE INSURED FOR! THEN WE SPLIT IT!
I...I DON'T KNOW! IT SOUNDS GOOD! BUT I'M AFRAID! SUPPOSE...SUPPOSE THERE'S A HITCH?

DON'T BE A FOOL, GEORGE! WHAT CAN GO WRONG?
SUPPOSE THE INSURANCE COMPANY SUSPECTS?

HOW CAN THEY? IT WILL LOOK LIKE HEART-FAILURE! I'LL BE AT HOME WITH A PERFECT ALIBI! NO ONE ELSE HAS ANY MOTIVE!
HOW LONG WILL THE EFFECT OF THE DRUG LAST?


THIRTY-SIX HOURS! YOU'LL BE UNCONSCIOUS! I'LL MAKE SURE THE FUNERAL IS RUSHED! THERE'LL BE NO LYING-IN-STATE... NO EMBALMING! IF YOU TAKE IT EARLY IN THE MORNING, AND THEY BURY YOU THE NEXT DAY, I'LL GET YOU OUT THAT NIGHT! THIRTY-SIX HOURS! SIMPLE? WELL, WHAT DO YOU SAY? FOR... TWENTY THOUSAND DOLLARS?

HMMM! SEEMS LIKE EVERYBODY'S GOT PROBLEMS! WELL! LET'S HURRY BACK ACROSS TOWN AND SEE WHAT SID AND MEL HAVE DECIDED...
ALL RIGHT, MEL! I'LL DO IT!
ATTA BOY, SID! WE'LL GET OLD GLEM TO HELP US! HE'LL DO ANYTHING FOR MONEY!


HEH, HEH! THE PLOT SICKENS... EH, KIDDIES? AS FOR ALEX AND GEORGE, SURELY YOU MUST HAVE ANTICIPATED...
I'LL AGREE, ALEX! BUT IT'S AGAINST MY BETTER JUDGEMENT...
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT, GEORGE! I'LL TAKE CARE OF EVERYTHING! HERE'S THE HYPODERMIC AND THE DRUG! TAKE A FULL SHOT...

AND FOR GOD'S SAKE, GET RID OF THE BOTTLE AND NEEDLE BEFORE THE STUFF TAKES EFFECT! YOU'LL HAVE ABOUT TEN MINUTES!
I'LL BE CAREFUL, ALEX! DON'T WORRY!

SO THAT'S THE SITUATION, FIENDS! LIKE IT? GOOD! NOW FOR THE COMPLICATIONS! READY? HERE GOES! THE NEXT MORNING, GEORGE'S LANDLADY DISCOVERS HIS BODY...
EEEEEE

A DOCTOR IS SUMMONED BY THE HYSTERICAL WOMAN.
THIS MAN IS DEAD! LOOKS LIKE HEART-FAILURE! MUST HAVE HAPPENED EARLY THIS MORNING! DID HE HAVE ANY RELATIVES?
NO! ONLY A FRIEND! I'LL GO FOR HIM!

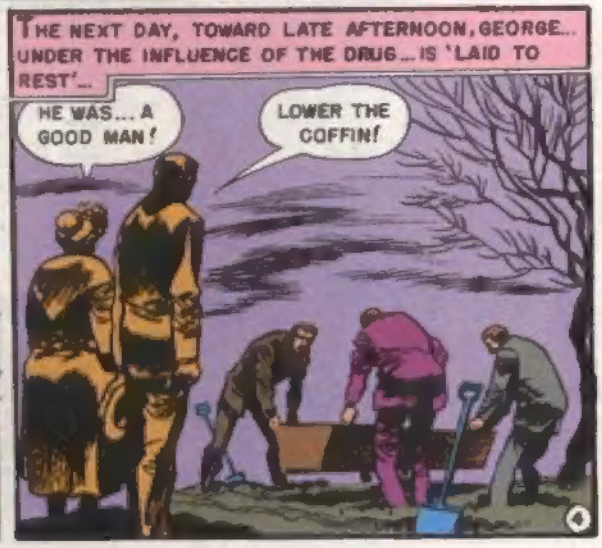
ALEX RECEIVES THE BAD NEWS...
WHAT? GEORGE...DEAD? GOOD LORD, WHAT A SHOCK! I'D BETTER COME BACK WITH YOU AND MAKE ARRANGEMENTS!
SOB...SOB! HE...HE WAS SUCH A GOOD MAN! SUCH A GOOD MAN!

ALEX ARRANGES GEORGE'S FUNERAL.
BUT, IT'S CUSTOMARY TO WAIT SEVERAL DAYS...
NO! GEORGE WOULDN'T HAVE WANTED IT THAT WAY! THE FUNERAL WILL BE HELD TOMORROW... IN THE AFTERNOON!

THAT EVENING... IN THEIR DORMITORY ROOM...
LOOK, SID! WE'RE IN LUCK! SOME POOR GUY ACROSS TOWN DIED THIS MORNING! THEY'RE BURYING HIM TOMORROW AFTERNOON!
COME! LET'S GO SEE CLEM! WE'LL DIG UP THE BODY TOMORROW NIGHT!

SID AND MEL FIND CLEM, THE RATHER STUPID COLLEGE HANDYMAN, AND EXPLAIN THEIR PLAN...
WAL...I DUNNO, FELLERS! DIGGIN' UP A CORPSE! THAT'S KINDA SCARY BUSINESS!
WE'LL MAKE IT WORTH YOUR WHILE, CLEM! SAY...FIVE DOLLARS?

WAL...FER FIVE DOLLARS... I MIGHT!
GOOD! MEET US HERE TOMORROW NIGHT!
BRING THE TOOLS!


THE NEXT DAY, TOWARD LATE AFTERNOON, GEORGE... UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF THE DRUG...IS 'LAID TO REST'...
HE WAS... A GOOD MAN!
LOWER THE COFFIN!

AFTER GEORGE'S CASKET IS LOWERED INTO THE YAWNING BLACK PIT, THE GRAVE-DIGGERS STEP FORWARD...
C'MON, ZEKE! LET'S GET IT OVER WITH! IT'S GETTIN' DARK!
SURE THING, HANK!

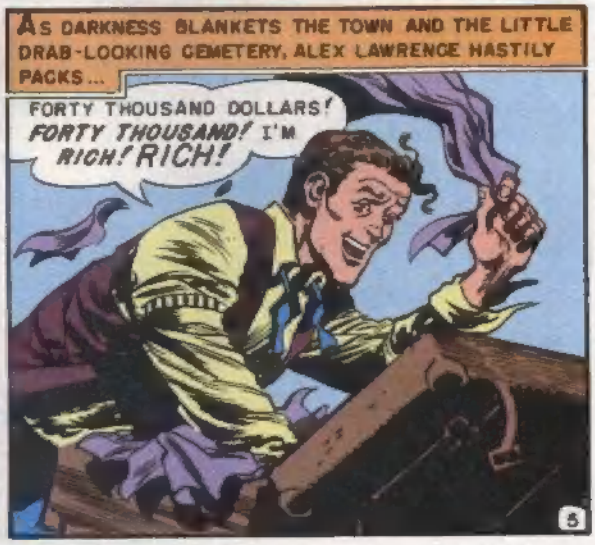
FROM A DISTANCE, ALEX, GEORGE'S BEST FRIEND AND BENEFICIARY, SMILES AS THE SOFT CRAWLING EARTH IS SHOVELED INTO GEORGE'S GRAVE...
HEH, HEH! WON'T YOU BE SURPRISED, GEORGE, WHEN THE DRUG WEARS OFF TONIGHT... AND I DON'T SHOW UP!

WHEN ALEX RETURNS TO HIS ROOMING HOUSE, A STRANGER IS WAITING FOR HIM...
MY NAME IS FOGERTY! I'M FROM COSMOPOLITAN LIFE! ARE YOU ALEX LAWRENCE?
THAT'S ME!

YOU ARE THE BENEFICIARY NAMED IN THE FORTY-THOUSAND DOLLAR POLICY OF THE RECENTLY DECEASED GEORGE ARKMAN...
YES! WHY? ANYTHING WRONG?

NO! WE'VE EXAMINED THE CERTIFICATE OF DEATH! EVERYTHING SEEMS TO BE IN ORDER!
WELL! WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SEE ME ABOUT, THEN?

WHY, TO PRESENT YOU WITH YOUR CHECK, MISTER LAWRENCE! HERE YOU ARE!
OH! I...I... THANK YOU!

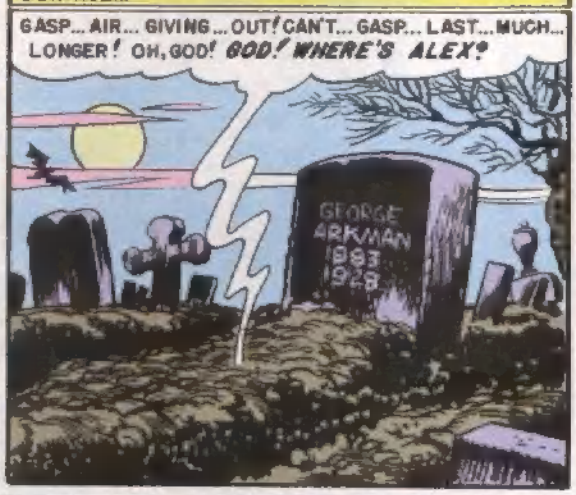

AS DARKNESS BLANKETS THE TOWN AND THE LITTLE DRAB-LOOKING CEMETERY, ALEX LAWRENCE HASTILY PACKS...
FORTY THOUSAND DOLLARS! FORTY THOUSAND! I'M RICH! RICH!

MEANWHILE, DEEP DOWN UNDER THE MOLDY BLACK EARTH IN THE CEMETERY, SOMETHING STIRS! GEORGE IS COMING TO...

GEORGE REACHES UP TO THE SATIN-LINED LID OF HIS UNDERGROUND PRISON...

AT THAT MOMENT, ALEX STANDS ON A USED-CAR LOT, SURVEYING A SHINY BLUE CONVERTIBLE...

LATER THAT NIGHT, AS GEORGE LIES BURIED SIX FEET BELOW THE CEMETERY'S GRAVESTONE BEDECKED SURFACE...



SLOWLY, THE GATE OF THE DESERTED CEMETERY SWINGS OPEN, ITS RUSTED HINGES SCREAMING IN PROTEST! THREE FIGURES ENTER...

GINGERLY, SID AND MEL, THE TWO MEDICAL STUDENTS, MAKE THEIR WAY ACROSS THE GRAVE-MOUNDS TO THE FRESH ONE...

DOWN BELOW, GEORGE HEARS A MUFFLED THUD, AS CLEM'S SPADE CUTS INTO THE DANK SOIL...

IT...IT...MUST...BE...ALEX! HURRY...ALEX! HURRY...! I'M...*SUFFOCATING!*

LITTLE BY LITTLE, CLEM'S SPADE GOUGES OUT AN EVER DEEPENING HOLE AS THE MINUTES TICK BY...

JUST A LITTLE DEEPER, CLEM! JUST A LITTLE...

UH-HUH!

HURRY...ALEX! HURRY...UP! GASP...

FAR ACROSS TOWN, THE MOTOR OF THE BLUE CONVERTIBLE HUMS AS ALEX, AT THE WHEEL, GUIDES IT OUT OF THE LOT...

GOOD LUCK, SIR! HOPE YOU LIKE THE BUS...

YEAH! THANKS!

THE HOLLOW BOOM OF CLEM'S SPADE STRIKING THE COFFIN ECHOES ACROSS THE DESERTED CEMETERY...

HURRY! PRY OPEN THE LID!

HERE! HERE'S A CROW-BAR!

UH-HUH!

CLEM SLIPS THE SHARP EDGE OF THE CROW-BAR UNDER THE LID AND PRESSES DOWN! THE COFFIN SHUDDERS...THEN THE LID GIVES WAY...

IT'S COMING LOOSE!

LIFT IT OFF, CLEM!

UH-HUH!

GEORGE, GASPING FOR AIR, COVERED WITH PERSPIRATION, SITS BOLT UPRIGHT IN THE COFFIN! CLEM'S EYES WIDEN...AS HE SCREAMS...

YAAAAAAAAAAH!

GOOD LORD!

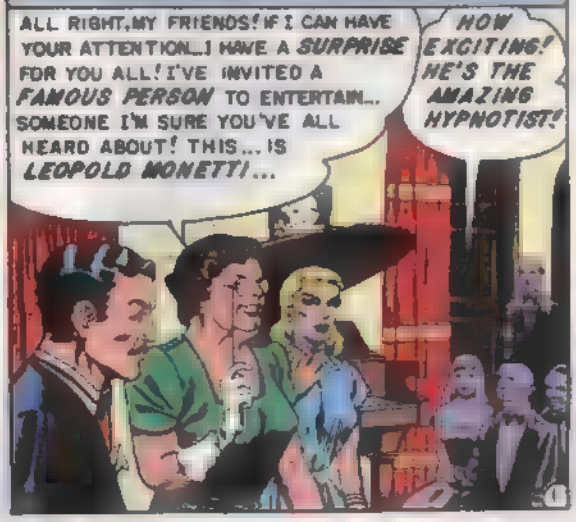
ALEX, IN HIS NICE NEW SHINY BLUE CONVERTIBLE, IS HITTING EIGHTY AS HE LEAVES TOWN ON THE ROAD THAT SKIRTS THE CEMETERY...
HEH, HEH! HOPE YOU'RE COMFORTABLE IN THERE, GEORGE!
SUDDENLY, TWO FIGURES LOOM UP BEFORE HIM... SCAMPERING ALONG THE ROAD...
LOOK OUT!
ALEX SWERVES TO AVOID HITTING THE FRIGHTENED, RACING STUDENTS! THE CAR HURTLES ACROSS THE ROAD TOWARD THE CEMETERY FENCE...
EEEAAAAAAGH!
LATER, IN A DARK CORNER OF A LOCAL BAR, SID AND MEL COMPOSE THEMSELVES WITH SEVERAL SHOTS OF HARD LIQUOR...
LORD, MEL! IF I DIDN'T SEE IT WITH MY OWN EYES, I WOULDN'T HAVE BELIEVED IT! THAT CORPSE ACTUALLY SAT UP!
AND THAT POOR GUY IN THE CONVERTIBLE! HE TRIED TO AVOID HITTING US AND KILLED HIMSELF!
FINALLY, SID AND MEL RETURN TO THEIR ROOM! AS THEY OPEN THE DOOR...
THE LESS SAID ABOUT TONIGHT, THE BETTER!
GEE! I WONDER WHAT HAPPENED TO CLEM!
HERE I IS! I BEEN WAITIN' ON YUH!
CLEM!
THAT'LL BE FIVE BUCKS, PLEASE! THAT'S WHAT YUH PROMISED ME FOR THE BODY!
GOOD LORD, SID! LOOK!
THE TWO MEDICAL STUDENTS STARE IN HORROR AT THE PROSTRATE BODY OF GEORGE ARKMAN STRETCHED OUT ON THE FLOOR... ITS HEAD CRUSHED FROM THE BLOW OF A CROW BAR...
HEH, HEH! YEP! OLD CLEM REALLY CAME ACROSS... BY GEORGE! AND SID AND MEL HAVE THE STIFF THEY NEEDED! AS FOR ALEX... WELL... HE'S PRETTY BLUE... FROM CAR PAINT! THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU GET ALL WRAPPED UP IN SOMETHING! NOW, I'LL TURN YOU OVER TO MY FELLOW GHOULUNATIC, THE VAULT-KEEPER, WHO'S WAITING TO RELATE HIS TERROR-TALE! SEE YOU LATER WITH INFORMATION ON HOW TO OBTAIN BACK ISSUES FROM ME! IT'S ALL COVERED IN MY COLUMN, THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S CORNER!

THE VAULT OF HORROR!

HEH, HEH! EVER BEEN *HYPNOTIZED? NO?* THEN YOU'LL LIKE THE *CHILLING YARN* I'M ABOUT TO SPIN! IT CONCERNS A HYPNOTIST... HIS WIFE... AND... WELL, WHY NOT COME INTO *THE VAULT OF HORROR*... PULL UP THAT COFFIN... SIT YOURSELF UPON ITS WORMY LID... AND LISTEN! YOU ALL KNOW WHO *I* AM! YEP! *THE VAULT-KEEPER!* READY? THEN, I'LL BEGIN! I CALL THIS *HORROR TALE*...

ANTS IN HER TRANCE!

THE GUESTS AT THE DINNER-PARTY TURNED AS THEIR WEALTHY HOSTESS, MRS. JUSTINE FLEETWOOD, CLAPPED HER HANDS FOR ATTENTION! BEHIND HER STOOD A STRIKING DARK-HAIRED MAN WITH BLACK PIERCING EYES! BESIDE HIM, A NERVOUS FRAIL-LOOKING WOMAN FIDGETED WITH HER NECKLACE.



LEOPOLD MONETTI STEPPED FORWARD AND BOWED GRACEFULLY! THEN HE TURNED TO THE PALE THIN WOMAN AT HIS SIDE...

THIS IS MY WIFE...EVETTE! TONIGHT, AT YOUR CHARMING HOSTESS'S REQUEST, I WILL PRESENT FOR YOUR ENJOYMENT A DEMONSTRATION OF *THE ASTOUNDING ART OF HYPNOTISM!*

WILL YOU ALL PLEASE FIND SEATS!

THE GUESTS SCURRIED ABOUT DRAGGING CHAIRS TO AND FRO UNTIL THEY WERE ALL SEATED BEFORE THE HYPNOTIST AND HIS WIFE...

NOW THAT YOU ARE SETTLED I WILL BEGIN! MY *WIFE* HERE WILL BE MY *SUBJECT* IN THIS DEMONSTRATION! FIRST, I WILL PLACE HER INTO A *HYPNOTIC TRANCE!* ONCE *PLACED* UNDER THIS SPELL, SHE WILL *OBEY MY EVERY WISH!* ONLY AFTER I UTTER THE WORDS *'SNAP OUT OF IT'!* WILL SHE BE *REVIVED!*

LEOPOLD TURNED TO HIS FRAIL WIFE AND PASSED HIS HANDS OVER HER FACE SEVERAL TIMES! THEN HE BEGAN TO STARE INTO HER EYES, WHILE MURMERING INCOHERENT PHRASES! SOON, EVETTE'S EYES GLAZED...HER BODY GREW RIGID...

THERE! EVETTE IS NOW IN A HYPNOTIC TRANCE! HER *WILL* IS *MINE TO COMMAND!*

THE MIND IS A WONDERFUL THING, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN! IT HAS FULL CONTROL OVER EVERY PART OF THE BODY! NORMALLY, WE DO NOT FULLY USE THE POWERS OF THE MIND! BUT, UNDER HYPNOTISM, THESE POWERS ARE BROUGHT INTO PLAY! FOR EXAMPLE...

MONETTI TURNED TO HIS WIFE..

EVETTE! *CRY!*

EVETTE'S WAXEN FEATURES SAGGED! SHE SIGHED PITIFULLY AND THEN BEGAN TO WHIMPER! HER EYES FILLED WITH TEARS! THEY SPILLED OVER HER EYE-LIDS AND RAN DOWN HER CHEEKS...

YOU SEE! AT MY COMMAND, SHE *INSTANTLY OBEYS!*

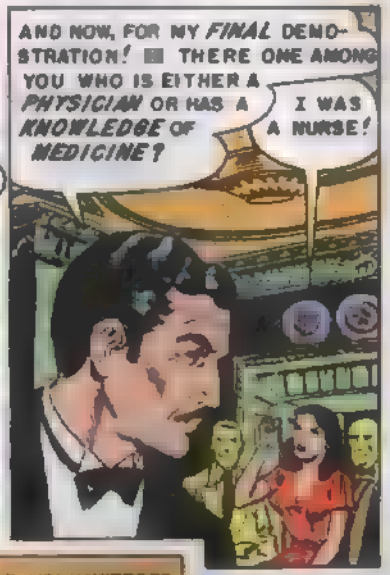
ASTOUNDING!

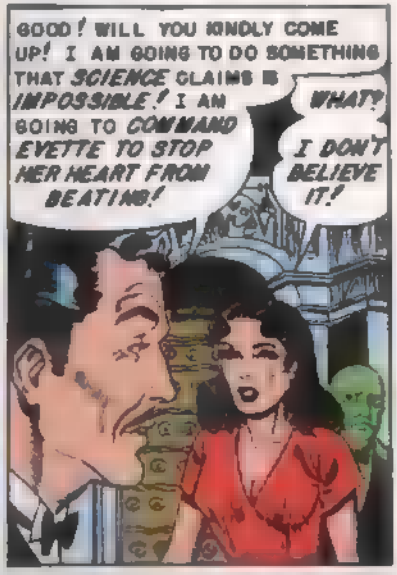
INCREDIBLE!

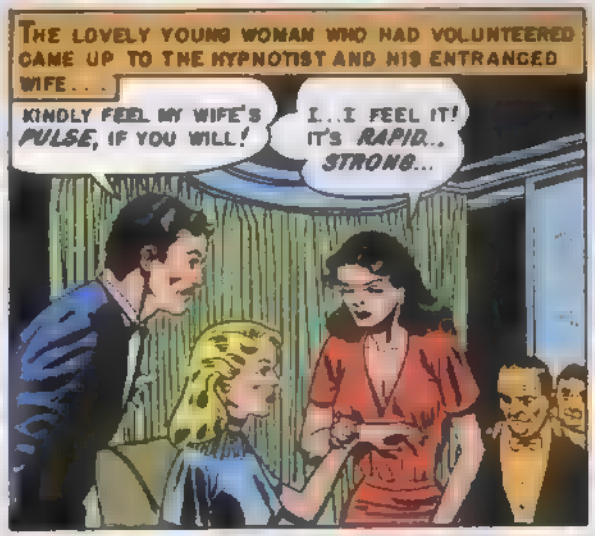
MONETTI TURNED TO HIS WIFE ONCE AGAIN...

EVETTE! *PERSPIRE!*

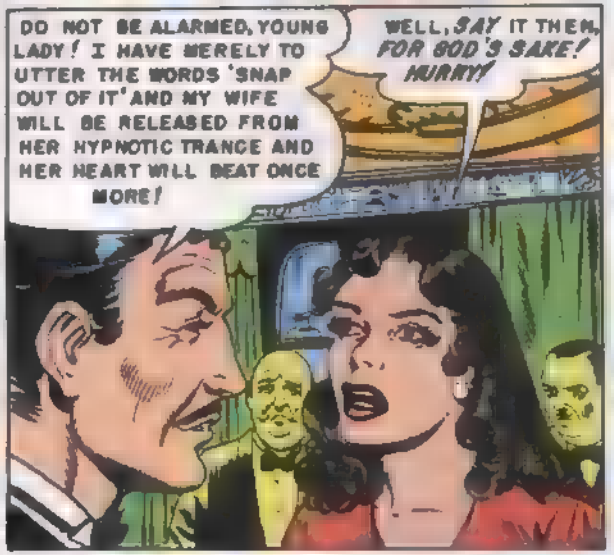
SMALL BEADS OF PERSPIRATION BURST FROM THE PORES IN EVETTE'S SALLOW FACE! SOON HER ENTIRE COUNTENANCE WAS SHINING WET...
SO... AT MY WORD! PERSPIRATION!
UNBELIEVABLE!
FANTASTIC!


AND NOW, FOR MY FINAL DEMONSTRATION! THERE ONE AMONG YOU WHO IS EITHER A PHYSICIAN OR HAS A KNOWLEDGE OF MEDICINE?
I WAS A NURSE!


GOOD! WILL YOU KINDLY COME UP! I AM GOING TO DO SOMETHING THAT SCIENCE CLAIMS IS IMPOSSIBLE! I AM GOING TO COMMAND EVETTE TO STOP HER HEART FROM BEATING!
WHAT?
I DON'T BELIEVE IT!


THE LOVELY YOUNG WOMAN WHO HAD VOLUNTEERED CAME UP TO THE HYPNOTIST AND HIS ENTRANCED WIFE...
KINDLY FEEL MY WIFE'S PULSE, IF YOU WILL!
I...I FEEL IT! IT'S RAPID... STRONG...

ALL RIGHT, EVETTE! STOP YOUR HEART!
GASP! HER PULSE! IT'S STOPPED! SHE'S DEAD!


DO NOT BE ALARMED, YOUNG LADY! I HAVE MERELY TO UTTER THE WORDS 'SNAP OUT OF IT' AND MY WIFE WILL BE RELEASED FROM HER HYPNOTIC TRANCE AND HER HEART WILL BEAT ONCE MORE!
WELL, SAY IT THEN, FOR GOD'S SAKE! HURRY!

SNAP OUT OF IT, EVETTE!
HUH! UH? WHERE AM... I... OH...
THANK THE LORD!

THE COLOR RETURNED TO EVETTE'S CHEEKS AND SHE MOVED ABOUT THE GUESTS CHATTING GAYLY! MEANWHILE, LEOPOLD HAD ENGAGED HIS VOLUNTARY ASSISTANT IN CONVERSATION...

YOU SEEMED WORRIED FOR A WHILE, MISS... MISS...

APPLETON! SELMA APPLETON! YES! I *WAS!*

YOU WERE IMPRESSED, THEN, MISS APPLETON? IT IS...*MISS?*

YES! IT'S MISS APPLETON! OH, I *WAS* IMPRESSED! VERY! YOU'RE *WONDERFUL!*

PERHAPS I CAN SEE YOU TOMORROW...SAY FOR LUNCH! WE CAN TALK FURTHER... ON HYPNOTISM!

OH, I'D BE *DELIGHTED!* MAKE IT TWELVE-THIRTY? THE BLUE CANDLE?

THE NEXT DAY, SELMA APPLETON MET LEOPOLD MONETTI FOR LUNCH! IN THE DIMNESS OF THE CANDLE-LIT CAFE...HIS EYES BORED INTO HERS AS HE CONFESSED...

I *HAD* TO SEE YOU AGAIN, SELMA! LAST NIGHT, WHEN I FIRST SAW YOU... I *KNEW IMMEDIATELY!* IT TOOK *ONLY A MOMENT...*

P... PLEASE, LEOPOLD! SOMEONE WILL *SEE* US!

LET THEM! I *MUST* TELL YOU! I'M IN LOVE WITH YOU! YOU'RE *BEAUTIFUL! EXCITING! DESIRABLE! I FELL IN LOVE WITH YOU THE MOMENT I SAW YOU!*

BUT, LEOPOLD! YOUR *WIFE!* YOU... YOU'RE *MARRIED!*

AND IF I WERE *NOT* MARRIED? WOULD YOU *CONSIDER...?*

I...I *DON'T KNOW!* I...I *LIKE* YOU! I... *THINK SO!* YES! I THINK I *WOULD!*

AND SO, A SECRET LOVE AFFAIR BETWEEN SELMA AND LEOPOLD BEGAN! THEY SAW EACH OTHER OFTEN AFTER THAT! FINALLY... ONE NIGHT, AT SELMA'S APARTMENT...

IT CAN'T GO *ON* LIKE THIS, LEO! THIS MEETING SECRETLY...BEHIND LOCKED DOORS... IN DARK STREETS...

WHAT CAN I *DO,* SELMA? EVETTE WOULD *NEVER* GIVE ME A *DIVORCE!*

SELMA SLIPPED DOWN BESIDE LEOPOLD! THERE WAS A WILD GLEAM IN HER EYES...

IF...IF SHE WERE *DEAD*, LEO, WE COULD BE *MARRIED!*

YOU MEAN... *KILL HER?*

IT COULD LOOK LIKE A *NATURAL DEATH!* YOU REMEMBER HOW WE *MET?* YOU WERE DEMONSTRATING HOW YOU COULD *COMMAND EVETTE TO STOP HER HEART...*

YOU WERE THE ONE WHO *FELT* HER PULSE! YOU THOUGHT SHE WAS *DEAD!*

EXACTLY! ANY *DOCTOR* WOULD HAVE *THOUGHT SO!* YOU REMEMBER YOU ASSURED ME...

I TOLD YOU THAT THE WORDS *'SNAP OUT OF IT'* WOULD *REVIVE* HER! THEY *ALWAYS DO!* WE'VE USED THE *SAME ONES FOR YEARS!*

SUPPOSE YOU USED *OTHER WORDS!* SUPPOSE YOU *'FAILED'* TO REVIVE HER!

SHE'D BE DEAD!

AND YOU'D BE *FREE!* THE POLICE WOULD CALL IT AN *UNFORTUNATE ACCIDENT!* THEY *COULDN'T* PROVE *'INTENT'!* YOU'D BE *BROKEN-HEARTED!*

YES! VERY! I'LL *DO IT*, SELMA!

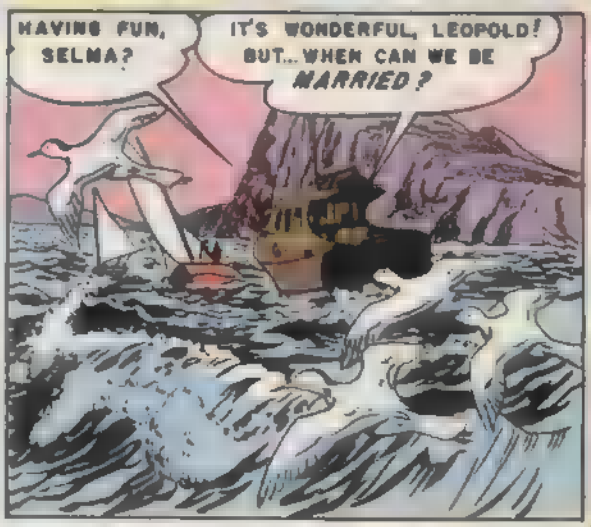
THE NEXT NIGHT, LEOPOLD AND EVETTE HAD AN ENGAGEMENT TO DEMONSTRATE HYPNOTISM! LEOPOLD HAD MADE UP HIS MIND...

YES! I FEEL HER PULSE! IT'S *VERY STRONG!*

ALL RIGHT, EVETTE! *STOP YOUR HEART!*

GOOD LORD! HER PULSE *HAS* STOPPED! WAKE HER UP, MAN!

WAKE UP, EVETTE! ER... *I SAID WAKE UP, EVETTE!*



HEH, HEH! YES, A YEAR IS A LONG TIME! TIME ENOUGH FOR A WOMAN LIKE SELMA TO BEGIN TO BROOD! THEN, WHEN THE YEAR WAS UP, LEOPOLD INSISTED THAT THEY VISIT EVETTE'S GRAVE...TO PAY THEIR RESPECTS...

SELMA BEGAN TO RAVE! HER SCREAMING VOICE ECHOED ACROSS THE HEADSTONES...

WE'RE *MURDERERS!* *MURDERERS!* *MURDERERS!*

THANK GOD THE PLACE IS *DESERTED!* NO ONE WILL HEAR HER!

LEOPOLD GRASPED SELMA'S SHOULDERS! HE SHOOK HER ROUGHLY...

SNAP OUT OF IT! YOU'RE HYSTERICAL!

SOB... SOB...

THEN THEY TURNED TO GO! AS THEY MADE THEIR WAY ACROSS THE ROWS OF GRAVES, A SMALL FISSURE APPEARED IN THE MOUND BELOW EVETTE'S TOMBSTONE! THE GRAVE WAS CRACKING OPEN...

SOB... SOB...

YOU WERE *RIGHT*, SELMA WE *SHOULDN'T* HAVE COME!

A ROTTED HAND, CRAWLING AND FOUL SMELLING, REACHED UP INTO THE GATHERING TWILIGHT! LEOPOLD AND SELMA WERE JUST DISAPPEARING INTO THE DUSK...

IT'S JUST THAT I THOUGHT IT WOULD *LOOK GOOD!* I DIDN'T THINK IT WOULD *BREAK YOU UP LIKE THAT!*

LEOPOLD AND SELMA REACHED THE CEMETERY GATE! IT TOWERED ABOVE THEM...RISING TWELVE FEET INTO THE FALLING DARKNESS...ENDING AT THE TOP IN RAZOR-SHARP SPIKES...

LEOPOLD! THE GATE!

GOOD LORD! IT'S LOCKED! CHAINED... AND LOCKED!

SUDDENLY THERE WAS A SOUND BEHIND THE TRAPPED COUPLE! THE NAUSEATING ODOR OF DECAY AND PUTRESCENCE BURNED THEIR NOSTRILS! THEY TURNED...

OH, MY GOD!

EVETTE!

THE MAGGOT-COVERED SLIMY THING LUMBERED TOWARD THEM! BITS OF ROTTED FLESH FELL FROM ITS CHALKY BONES! CLODS OF GRAVE YARD EARTH SLIPPED FROM ITS MOLDY CLOTHES! IT REACHED OUT A DECAYED HAND TOWARD THEM...PASSING IT BEFORE THEIR PALED FACES...

YAAAAAAA! *EEEEEE!*

HEH, HEH! THEY *FOUND* SELMA AND LEO THE *NEXT MORNING!* FUNNY THING! THERE WASN'T A *MARK* ON EITHER OF THEM! THE *CORONER* SAID IT LOOKED LIKE *HEART-FAILURE!* THEIR *EYES* WERE BULGING OUT OF THEIR *SOCKETS* THOUGH! *HE* SAID IT WAS AS IF THEY'D BEEN *HYPNOTIZED!* HEH, HEH! WELL! WE KNOW *DIFFERENT*, EH? A BETTER NAME FOR IT WOULD BE '*CORPSENOTIZED*'! OH, BY THE WAY! *YOUR* EYES WILL BULGE FROM THEIR SOCKETS WHEN YOU SEE BACK ISSUES! *THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S CORNER*, WHICH FOLLOWS *THE TEXT*, TELLS YOU HOW TO GET *YOURS!*

THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S CORNER

President and CEO—Stephen A. Geppi

Publisher—Russ Cochran

Dear "CRYPTY" (Crypt-Keeper),

I know your nickname is "CRYPTY." I wanted [redacted] say that I loved the story "Trapped!" in VAULT 10. (I'm not writing good because I'm writing with A PEN THAT DOESN'T HAVE INK!) I loved the line when Marty was all in the sticky stuff and says, "IT...IT'S LIKE FLY PAPER!" I imagined Marty's voice like a New Orleans type.

Ramiro J. Roman — Glendale, CA

Oui, y'all. Get some ink, my old eyes aren't what they used to be! —CK

Do you and the Vault-Keeper ever fight? Sinfearly,

Chad J. Barr — Peachtree City, GA

Sure, we fight—we fight The Old Witch! —CW

It's me, DARK DEMON Who was the Crypt-Keeper before you? Do you have to pay taxes and how old are you?

Dark Demon — address unknown

I am the original Keeper! None authentic without this signature: ✕ ! I am exempt from death, and I am exempt from taxes! Eat your heart out!! -CK

I'm an average-sized fan who loves your stories as did my dad when he was a kid. "Judy, You're Not Yourself Today" definitely ruled. That was the weirdest story ever written. Who wrote it? Do you have any background on it? I also liked the one about the leisure class kids ending up with leprosy. Who's the probe who wrote that one? It was cool, and ruled, too. Another one that ruled was the one with the poor sister and her brother who turns into glop. That one was so grim it made Kafka look like Dick Clark. Other than EC I like the early, early SPIDERMAN comics. PLASTICMAN is also cool. But if I had to have one thing to say, it would be, "Judy, You're Not Yourself Today" rules! As does the Crypt-Keeper. He's boss and george!

Nat Hirsh — Lakeville, CT

And, I'm gone, besides! Let's see—we're into the second year of EC's New Trend, Feldstein is doing covers only, the art is by Wood with no particular reason to believe Harrison was involved; we can assume Feldstein wrote the script altho the psychic angle is less mechanistic than lots of Feldstein. —CK

How you been hanging? Probably at the end of a rope, ha, ha. You can print my address.

Adam Griesbaum — 4971 Cleveland RD, Wooster, OH 44691

Yes, ha-ha. I got noose for you; when at the end of your rope, keep your trap (door) shut! —CK

"ABRA CADAVER"

I just got issue #10, and you guys sure didn't disappoint me:

"Drawn And Quartered!"': Excellent! Oh, and in your painting at the beginning, isn't that the werewolf from "By The Fright Of The Silvery Moon!" in the upper righthand corner? "The Borrowed Body": Good plot, but not as well carried-out as I would have expected. "Indian Burial Mound": As much as I hate to say it, I could not get into this story. This was the first EC story I've ever seen without at least one exclamation point. After reading it, I can understand why. "Political Pull!": Not as good as "Drawn And Quartered!", but excellent just the same.

As for "Abra Cadaver," it's about a doctor whose career is ruined when his brother's cruel practical joke gives him a heart attack. He gets back at his brother by killing him and giving him a voodoo drug to keep his brain alive. He then pretends to cut his brother's brain out as a practical joke. The joke gives the brother a heart attack, and kills him. So, can ya ID it for me? Keep printing my address.

Myron James — RR 4 BOX 141, Rockville, [redacted] 47872

I don't have to ID it, 'cause... —CK

About...the new CRYPT movie, "Demon Knight;" see this film! I give [it] two (severed) thumbs up!

I wish people would stop complaining about the HBO show. TV and comics are too different mediums and so of course the stories have to be a little different. True, the show goes too far sometimes, but for the most part, I think it is worthy of its title. I am certain that you and the HBO CK are the same; after all, if you were an old man in the fifties, by now you would probably be a rotting corpse.

Finally, I have a helpful note for Myron James, who asked in which issue the story "Abra Cadaver" could be found. You replied that you never ran a story with that title. This is because the story was originally called "Dead Right!". HBO had already used that title with a completely different story. They obviously wanted to use the original story later on, so they changed the title to "Abra Cadaver." You can print my address.

David Lowery II — 1016 Grosse PT, Irving, TX 75061

Now the question is, what is the plot of the HBO "Dead Right?" (Our "Dead Right!" ran in CRYPT #37—will be our #21.) —CK

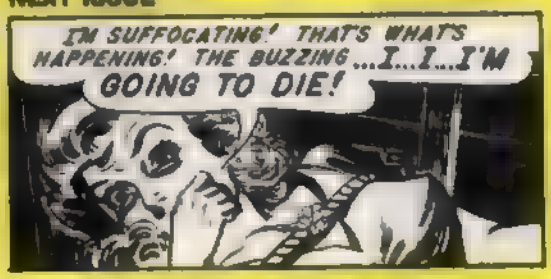
MORE HBO STUFF

Are the covers you use now the same covers that were used on the original comics? Which SHOCK issue will (or has) reprint(ed) "Carrion Death!"? I saw that one on HBO and loved it and would like to read it.

Tyler Compton — Folsom, CA

Yup, original covers. You'll find "Carrion Death!" in SHOCK 5, which is available from us as a back issue (art by the great Reed Crandall). —CK

NEXT ISSUE



I always tape your TV show. My dad loves it and so do I. I watched the Santa Claus one on Saturday night, I loved it! I want that one to come on every Saturday night!

Tiffany Wise — Stafford, VA

And on tape, it can! —CK

There was a "Crypt" episode with Larry (L.A. Law) Drake about an escaped mental patient dressed as Santa Claus who terrorizes a winter cabin; which magazine is it in? There was an episode starring Lou Diamond Phillips and Priscilla Presley called "Oil's Well that Ends Well," where can I find it? Why aren't there "Crypt"s on videos? I have to watch the crappy re-runs that are toned down! Finally, why is the cable show going off? I saw a preview for it in a magazine

James C. Puckett — Houston, TX

I've been assuming the bogus Santa is from "...And All Through the House...", VAULT #35 (will be our VAULT 24) and "Oil's Well" will be in CRYPT #34 (our CRYPT 18, but also in 64-pg RCP CRYPT #2 available now!). The other questions are for cooler heads than mine! —CK

I have CRYPT comics and I watch your show on HBO and FOX, but I like the ones on HBO better because they don't leave the good parts out.

Jack Conner, age 12 — St. Charles, MO

Makes them kinda creppy, do you think? Or, does it make them more widely entertaining? —CK

I am very excited about the HBO "Tales from the Crypt" season finale that airs on February 15, "You, Murderer." It was a brilliant idea to have Humphrey Bogart "resurrected" for it.

My favorite episodes of your show are "Well Cooked Hams" and "The Thing from the Grave." Please print my address.

Chad Kushkins (CK), 11 — E Grand CYN LN, Coram, NY 11727

I am of two minds on computech 'resurrections;' at least the producers of TV's "Crypt" know the significance of the images they'll be tampering with. Better them than soft drink guys! —CK

I have collected CRYPT Volume 1 and 2. If you don't really like The Vault-Keeper and The Old Witch why do you let those morons be in your comic book? Please print my address. I would like to have a pen pal.

Alexander Orozco — 10501 Sam Miguelave, South Gate, CA 90280

I look so good by comparison! —CK

I love your stories. Me and my big brother collect your comics. I would like a pen pal.

Derek Drake — 681 E Garden RD, Vineland, NJ

CRYPT 10 was awesome! "Drawn and Quartered!" was the best story in the mag! "The Borrowed Body!" made no sense to me—how do they switch bodies? "Indian Burial Mound" was the classic plot 'man does something mean and dies for it.' "Political Pull!" was exciting, but a little predictable. Please print my address.

Brandon Hendrix — POB 117, Broken Bow, OK 74728

I read your comics and watch your shows. I enjoy the blood, gore and murder. I enjoy drawing comics of my own. I have very few friends but the friends I have love CRYPT. Could I be in your fan club?

Dustin (Crypt, Jr.) Price — Coushatta, LA

Three of the most vocal fan-groups are: HORROR FROM THE CRYPT OF FEAR, 30 Ivy DR, Midvale, UT 84047; THE EC REGISTER, Abner Doon Productions, 6601 Atlantic AV, Margate City, NJ 08402 and THE INTERNATIONAL E.C. FAN CLUB, 5947 Colgate ST, Philadelphia, PA 19120. —CK

Do you have Crypt POGS? If you do give me some or tell me where they are.

Greg Miller, age 9 — Reisterstown, MD

I had the chickenPOGS once. Didn't like it; all that scratching (darn those chickens)!. No, you got me. But I show up in the darnedest places. Keep lookin'! —CK

Waz up? I was in New York last night around 11:00 and I saw the comic store and I walked out with the first 5 issues just like that. What kind of music do you like?

Keith Elphick — Upper Montclair, NJ

I assume you paid for those comics before walking! Music to my ears is the ringing of a cash register when you buy EC comics! —CK

I saw the "Tales from the Crypt: Demon Knight" movie last week. It was horrible, terrifying, gruesome, disgusting, and nightmare-inducing. I loved it! Please print my address. I would like to hear from other TFTC fans.

Darrell S. Haslett, age 22 — 916 W McClure, Peoria, IL 61604-3360

[Re: the CRYPT 8 locol]: What about the wrinkles? Hey, wanna make somethin' of it? Rot long 'n prosper.

Curt "Crypt" Hovis — Marion, IL

All I'm saying is if I had enuf wrinkles, I could make a whole 'nother Old Witch! —CK

Why don't you wear your hood like everyone else?

Mark Piekielnaik — Utica, NY

Got not hood, got not hat, got no cauldron, got no bat! Got no sock, got no shoe; so depressed, my robe is blue! (Ain't you sorry you asked?) —CK

Only getting one EC comic each month wasn't enough. So I decided to subscribe to your others! Are you going to make new stories beside reprints? Do you need help with them, I am your man. Print address. I would like a Crypt pen pal.

Zac Gale — 2324 Willard ST, Saginaw, MI 48602

No plans for new material. Be sure your pen has ink (see R. Roman, above)! —CK

NEXT ISSUE

I have sat quietly in my dark, smelly corner since the Gladstone reprint era. I was content with the EC comics until now. It's a sad thing, but I can't stand it any longer! Coming out of the dark, I have come to display just how angry I am at the appalling letters your other fans write. What a dirty game they play, for everyone should know that I am your one and only #1 fan. I bow at your feet and am at your service. Now that I've let the world know this, I can crawl back to my dark corner and die. Don't anybody dare challenge me! Thank you.

Kristian Mroczko — Whitefield, NH

ANOTHER MEDIUM HEARD FROM

I have a "Tales from the Crypt" audio tape called "Have a Scary Little Christmas!"

What issue will "Auntie, It's Coal Inside!" appear in? I can't find your cards at any store. I like the story "Indian Burial Mound" [CRYPT 10]. And please print my address.

Patrick Burkett
622 S 22nd ST
Terra Haute, IN 47803

"Auntie" is in CRYPT #30—will be CRYPT 14 quite soon. (How do you get to be Anti-social? Certainly don't be Uncle 'Legal.' Well, I that it was funny.) Get our cards from us, $1.50 per pack ppd. —CK

THEIR FAVE STORIES

I don't usually read comic books, but I couldn't resist checking [yours] out. My favorite story was "Drawn and Quartered!". Please print my address so that pen pal[s] can write to me. I'm a slightly morbid 16 year old girl and a junior in high school. You're pretty cool for a dead guy, CK!

Jocelyn Spitzer
1906 Rugby RD
Champaign, IL 61821

"Well-Cooked Hams!": Jack Davis has some real talent. Very good and I would recommend it. "Madam Bluebeard": One of the best stories I have ever read. "Return!": Creepy in a way. "Horror! Head...It Off!": One of the worst stories I ever read. "Lower Berth!": Interesting story with a surprise ending. "This Trick'll Kill You!": Kind of boring in the beginning, but then it got better. "The Switch": Another good one by the Crypt-Keeper.

Peter Keppler, age 11 — Nesconset, NY

My favorite stories are "Lower Berth!", [CRYPT "33"] "Scared to Death!", "Strop! You're Killing Me!" [CRYPT "37"] and "Taint the Meat...It's the Humanity!" [CRYPT "32"] Tell The Vault-Keeper that I like "Pearly to Dead" [CRYPT "40"]. Tell The Old Witch that I like the tale "Poetic Justice!" [HAUNT 12]

Mike Lowenstern, age 9½ — Newton, MA

One of my favorite stories is "Death's Turn!", CRYPT #6. You have my permission to print my address so I can have pen pals.

Orlando Garcia
1729 W Superior
Chicago, IL 60622

"Madness at Manderville" in CRYPT 2 and "Bats in my Belfry" in CRYPT 8. Please don't chop this letter.

Alena A. Ralston — Detroit, MI

My favorite comic stories are "Sinkhole!" and "Dying to Lose Weight!" [VAULT 7], "Daddy Lost His Head!!" [VAULT 8], "Scared to Death!" [CRYPT 8] and "The Irony of Death!" [HAUNT 8]. My favorite ones on TV are "The Tattoo" ["...On a Dead Men's Chest!", HAUNT 12?] and "What's Cooking, Doc" ["What's Cooking'?", HAUNT 12?]

Matt Smith — Utica, NY

We welcome letters of comment. We cannot promise to acknowledge, publish or answer letters. We edit for clarity, accuracy and length. We automatically withhold street address and zip code unless you clearly state you wish them published. We attempt to acknowledge publication of letters. To do so we need your address on the individual letter.

!AHF (I also heard from):

S. Adams (Happy Birthday!)	Edison, NJ
John Brown	Harriman, TX
Dwayne L. Heath	Dearborn HTS, MI
Carl Pietrantonio	Laredo, TX
Brandon O'Donnell	Pittsburgh, PA
Paul O'Leary	Needham, MA
name unknown	Gays, IL

WOW!

LOOK AT THIS!

In the 70s, East Coast Comix reprinted 12 EC comics in facsimile form. Certain issues have been harder to get for years now. We have found an EXTREMELY LIMITED quantity of their 3rd thru 10th issues. In addition, issues 11 and 12 are listed here at the same price currently on our mail order form.

We particularly recommend #9, that issue of TWO-FISTED TALES is one of the greatest individual comic books of all time!

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The above are $15. each.

#11 (WEIRD SCIENCE "#12") (#1)
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Also available this month are WEIRD SCIENCE and SHOCK. Watch for VAULT, WEIRD FANTASY and TWO-FISTED next month. Don't forget HAUNT, FRONTLINE COMBAT and CRIME. Get them at your local comic book shop or SUBSCRIBE (see our ad in this comic for details)!

BACK ISSUES: CRYPT #1, $3 each (subject to availability). All others up thru issue #3, $1.50 each. Issues #4 and up, $2 each. Add $5 per order ($10 outside US) for S&H.

Write to:
CRYPT
RUSS COCHRAN
POB 469
WEST PLAINS MO 65775

THIS COMIC REPRINTS
TALES FROM THE CRYPT "#28" (#12, FEB/MAR 52)

COVER by Al Feldstein

"Bargain Death!	Jack Davis
"Ants in Her Trance!"	Joe Orlando
"A-Corny Story"	Jack Kamen
"The Ventriloquists's Dummy!"	Graham Ingels

YOU'LL SHUDDER OVER THIS ONE EVEN THOUGH YOU MIGHT CALL IT...

A-CORNY STORY

Jack Kamen

ARNOLD EVERETTE STRODE DOWN THE AISLE BETWEEN THE ROWS OF DESKS THAT LINED HIS OFFICE, GLANCING FROM ONE TO THE OTHER! HE SMILED TO HIMSELF AS HE NOTED THE OCCUPANT OF EACH! YES! THINGS WERE WORKING OUT FINE! THERE WAS ONLY ONE MAN LEFT.. ONE MAN TO GET RID OF! OLD MAN PIETRO! ARNOLD STOPPED BEFORE THE GREYING, AGED CARLO PIETRO'S DESK AND LOOKED DOWN AT THE GAUNT FIGURE...

ER... WILL YOU SEE ME IN MY OFFICE, MR. PIETRO? SAY TEN MINUTES?

WHY... YES, SIR!

ARNOLD RETURNED TO HIS LUXURIOUS PRIVATE OFFICE! HE WAITED IMPATIENTLY FOR PIETRO'S KNOCK! AFTER A WHILE IT CAME... TWO TIMID RAPS! ARNOLD BID HIM ENTER.

YOU... WANTED TO *SEE* ME, MR. EVERETTE?

YES, MR. PIETRO! COME IN! SIT DOWN!

THE WRINKLED OLD MAN SAT DOWN NERVOUSLY! ARNOLD STUDIED HIM... NOTED HIS TREMBLING BONEY HANDS... HIS GRIM SKULL-LIKE FACE...
I'VE INSTRUCTED THE CASHIER TO ISSUE YOU A CHECK FOR TWO WEEKS PAY IN ADVANCE, MR. PIETRO! I'M SORRY... BUT I'M FORCED TO LET YOU GO...
BUT... WHY, SIR? DID I DO SOMETHING WRONG?
NO, PIETRO! IT'S NOT THAT! IT'S JUST THAT YOU'RE TOO OLD! I WANT ONLY YOUNG MEN WORKING FOR EVERETTE AND SON!
BUT, MR. EVERETTE! I'VE BEEN HERE TWENTY YEARS! I WORKED FOR YOUR FATHER BEFORE YOU!
THAT DOESN'T MATTER NOW! MY FATHER IS DEAD! THERE IS NO ROOM FOR SENTIMENT IN BUSINESS! I WANT NO OLD MEN WORKING FOR ME! THEY'RE SLOW... TIRE EASILY...
PLEASE! I HAVE NO PLACE TO GO... NO ONE TO TURN TO!
DON'T YOU HAVE A FAMILY, CARLO?
NO! THEY ARE ALL BACK IN HAITI! I LEFT THEM TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO TO COME TO WORK IN AMERICA!
WELL, WHY NOT GO BACK TO THEM? A MAN YOUR AGE SHOULD RETIRE ANYWAY!
PERHAPS YOU ARE RIGHT! I ONLY HOPE THAT WHEN YOU ARE OLD, YOU ARE NOT TREATED THIS WAY!
ARNOLD TURNED AWAY FROM THE WRETCHED OLD MAN AND GLANCED INTO THE MIRROR! EXCEPT FOR A FEW WORRY LINES ACROSS HIS FOREHEAD, HE SCARCELY LOOKED HIS THIRTY-FIVE YEARS...
DON'T WORRY, CARLO! I'LL MAKE SURE I'M NOT DEPENDENT ON ANYONE WHEN THAT TIME COMES!
SOME OF US ARE NOT AS FORTUNATE! YOU DO NOT HAVE TO FEAR OLD AGE!
NOT WITH MY DOUGH, CARLO! BUT... I'M A BUSY MAN! YOU CAN PICK UP YOUR CHECK ON THE WAY OUT! GOOD-DAY!
GOOD-BYE, MR. EVERETTE. PERHAPS YOUR LOVE OF YOUTH, AND CONTEMPT FOR OLD AGE WILL CHANGE IN THE FUTURE! WE SHALL SEE!
2

CARLO PIETRO LEFT THE OFFICES OF EVERETTE AND SON AND NEVER RETURNED! ARNOLD HIRED A YOUNG MAN TO TAKE HIS PLACE, AND CARLO WAS SOON FORGOTTEN! BUT SEVERAL WEEKS LATER... IN HAITI... WHERE THE AGING PIETRO HAD GONE...

WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH *VOODOO*, OLD MAN? WHY DO YOU *COME* TO ME?

I WANT SOMETHING FOR ONE WHO *LOVES YOUTH TOO MUCH*... TO *TEACH HIM A LESSON!*

IT WAS ALMOST TWO MONTHS AFTER ARNOLD HAD FIRED CARLO PIETRO THAT THE CRATE ARRIVED! ARNOLD SURVEYED IT ON THE REAR TERRACE OF HIS PALATIAL ESTATE...

WHAT IN THE WORLD COULD IT *BE*, JEEVES? IS THERE A RETURN ADDRESS?

YES, SIR! IT COMES FROM *HAITI*... A *CARLO PIETRO* SENT IT!

THE CRATE STOOD ABOUT SEVEN FEET HIGH! ARNOLD SCOWLED AT IT...

PIETRO, EH? WELL! MIGHT AS WELL OPEN IT AND SEE WHAT IT IS!

JEEVES, THE BUTLER, PRIED THE SIDES OF THE CRATE LOOSE AND THEY FELL AWAY, REVEALING...

WHY, IT'S A SMALL TREE, SIR! HOW QUAINT! LOOK HOW *GNARLED* IT IS!

THERE'S A NOTE HANGING ON ONE OF ITS BRANCHES!

IT SAYS: DEAR MR. EVERETTE, IN MY NATIVE LAND THIS TREE IS WORSHIPPED BY THE UNEDUCATED! THEY BELIEVE THAT IT CAN WARD OFF OLD AGE! KNOWING HOW MUCH YOU DESPISE THAT INEVITABLE STATE, I SEND THIS VARIETY OF OAK TO YOU! PERHAPS IT WILL HELP!

CARLO PIETRO

SARCASTIC OLD CODGER!

WHAT SHALL WE *DO* WITH IT, SIR?

HOW IN BLAZES SHOULD *I* KNOW? *PLANT IT*. I GUESS! IT'S AN *INTERESTING* TYPE OF TREE IN ANY CASE! YES! PLANT IT!

AND SO, WHILE ARNOLD EVERETTE WATCHED, HIS SERVANT DUG A HOLE NEAR THE GARDEN WALL AND PLANTED THE WEIRD GNARLED DWARF-TREE...

THAT'S A *GOOD SPOT* FOR IT! I *CAN'T SEE IT* FROM THE HOUSE, SO I WON'T BE *REMINDED* OF THE UGLY THING!

A WEEK WENT BY! THE BURDEN OF WORK THAT HAD GROWN SO HEAVY ON ARNOLD SEEMED LIGHTER, SOMEHOW! ARNOLD MOVED ABOUT BRISKLY, AND BEGAN TO FEEL MORE ENERGETIC...

GOOD MORNING, MR. EVERETTE! YOU'RE *LOOKING WELL* THIS MORNING!

I *FEEL* WELL THIS MORNING, JEEVES!

ARNOLD FOUND A DESIRE TO PLAY GOLF AGAIN... SOMETHING HE HADN'T DONE FOR YEARS...

GOOD SHOT, EVERETTE! RIGHT ON THE *GREEN!*

LORD! I HAVEN'T PLAYED LIKE THIS SINCE I WAS *THIRTY!*

EVEN HIS VISITS TO NIGHT CLUBS AND THEATERS WITH OLD FLAMES GREW MORE FREQUENT...

WHY, ARNOLD, YOU *DEAR!* YOU DANCE *DIVINELY!* THIS BRINGS BACK OLD MEMORIES... DOESN'T IT?

NOT SO OLD, HELEN! REMEMBER! *THINK YOUNG... FEEL YOUNG!*

THEN... ONE MORNING... ARNOLD STARED INTO THE MIRROR...

THAT'S FUNNY! I USED TO HAVE *WRINKLES* ON MY FOREHEAD AND UNDER MY EYES! *NOW*... THEY'RE *GONE!*

IT WAS THAT VERY SAME MORNING THAT ARNOLD SAW THE TREE! HE'D DECIDED TO *WALK* TO THE STATION AND HAD NOTICED IT AS HE PASSED THE GARDEN WALL...

WHY, EVEN THE *TREE* PIETRO SENT ME LOOKS *NICER!* DOESN'T SEEM AS *CROOKED* AND *GNARLED* ANYMORE! AND THE *LEAVES* LOOK *GREENER!*

ARNOLD SMILED AND WALKED ON PAST! LIFE CERTAINLY WAS BRIGHT AND CHEERFUL LATELY! PROBABLY BEING SURROUNDED WITH YOUNG MEN AT THE OFFICE DID IT! THEN... SOME DAYS LATER...

H'MMM! FACE DOESN'T LOOK *BAD* THIS MORNING! THINK I CAN SQUEEZE BY WITHOUT A *SHAVE* TODAY!

ARNOLD WAS WHISTLING A MERRY TUNE AS HE NEARED THE GARDEN WALL... BUT THE TUNE DIED TO A RUSH OF AIR THROUGH HIS LIPS AS HE SPIED THE TREE...

STRANGE! THE TREE SEEMS TO BE STRAIGHTENING UP! IT LOOKS... *DIFFERENT!* ALMOST... *YOUNGER!*

THE NEXT MORNING ARNOLD DIDN'T HAVE TO SHAVE AGAIN! OR THE FOLLOWING MORNING, FOR THAT MATTER...

GOOD LORD! MY BEARD! IT'S STOPPED GROWING!

ARNOLD DIDN'T GO TO THE OFFICE ONE DAY! HE'D MEANT TO, BUT A STRANGE DESIRE TOOK HOLD OF HIM! THE AFTERNOON FOUND HIM IN THE BLEACHERS ALONG WITH HUNDREDS OF TEEN-AGERS CHEERING FOR THE HOME TEAM...

C'MON, PEE-WEE! SLAM IT, KID!

YOU CAN DO IT!

IN FACT, ARNOLD NEVER WENT TO THE OFFICE AGAIN! SOMEHOW, HE'D SUDDENLY LOST INTEREST...

AH, THIS IS THE LIFE! THE OL' SWIMMIN' HOLE! JUST LIKE WHEN I WAS A KID!

EXCEPT FOR THE CURIOUS FACT THAT HIS BEARD HAD STOPPED GROWING AND HIS WRINKLES HAD VANISHED, ARNOLD HAD NOT NOTICED THE HORRIBLE CHANGE THAT WAS TAKING PLACE! IT WASN'T UNTIL HIS TAILOR EXPLODED, THAT HE REALIZED SOMETHING WAS WRONG...

SACRE DIEU! YOUR SUIT! IT FITS LIKE A *BAG! IMPOSSIBLE!* YOUR MEASUREMENTS HAVE *CHANGED!*

CHANGED? HOW? I--I DON'T UNDERSTAND!

AND WHEN JEEVES ANNOUNCED THAT HE WAS LEAVING... TERROR CREPT INTO ARNOLD'S HEART...

I'LL FIND EMPLOYMENT ELSEWHERE, SIR! YOUR ACTIONS LATELY...ER...FORCE ME TO RESIGN! YOU...YOU'VE BEEN BEHAVING LIKE AN *ADOLESCENT!*

AN...*ADOLESCENT!* GOLLY! I DON'T GET IT, JEEVES! AW C'MON, HANG AROUND!

ARNOLD LOCKED HIMSELF IN AFTER JEEVES LEFT! HE WAS FORCED TO SEARCH THROUGH OLD TRUNKS IN THE ATTIC FOR CLOTHES LONG SINCE PACKED AWAY TO WEAR! *CHILD'S CLOTHES...*

OH, *LOOK!* MY OLD *ELECTRIC TRAINS!* GEE! I WONDER IF THEY STILL *WORK!*

ONE DAY, AS ARNOLD SCAMPERED ABOUT THE GARDEN, HIS HOOP ROLLED OVER TO THE WALL! IT STOPPED BEFORE A YOUNG, QUEERLY SHAPED TREE... A SAPLING...

GEE! THAT *TREE!* IT... IT *MEANS* SOMETHING...BUT I... I CAN'T REMEMBER *WHAT!*

IT WAS THE GNARLED OLD CROOKED TREE THAT CARLO PIETRO HAD SENT! NOW, IT STOOD FIRM AND STRAIGHT... REACHING TOWARD THE SUNLIGHT! ARNOLD STUDIED IT FOR A MOMENT, SCRATCHED HIS MOP OF UNKEMPT HAIR ... THEN SKIPPED AWAY...

OH, WELL! ANOTHER TIME! NOW I'VE GOT TO GO PLAY WITH MY SOLDIERS!

THE NEXT MORNING, ARNOLD TUMBLED OUT OF BED ONTO THE FLOOR! HE TRIED TO GET UP! SOMETHING WAS WRONG! HIS SHORT STUBBY LEGS WOULDN'T RESPOND! HE CRAWLED ALL THAT DAY...

MA...BWOCKS! WHERE ARE MA BWOCKS! OH! DERE DEY AWR! OWVER DERE...

NEAR THE GARDEN WALL, THE INFANT THAT ARNOLD HAD BECOME CRAWLED AFTER AN INTERESTING LITTLE INSECT! HE STOPPED BEFORE A YOUNG GREEN SHOOT, SPROUTING FROM THE SOFT RICH EARTH...

PWETTY FWOWER! NICE PWETTY FWOWER!

THAT NIGHT THE DESERTED HOUSE OF ARNOLD EVERETTE WAS FILLED WITH THE SQUALLING HOWLS OF A HUNGRY BABY...CRYING FOR ITS BOTTLE...

A-WAH... A-WAH... A-WAH... HIC... A-WAH!

TOWARD MORNING, THE SCREAMS HAD CHANGED TO THE FAINT GURGLES AND CRIES OF A NEW-BORN BABE...

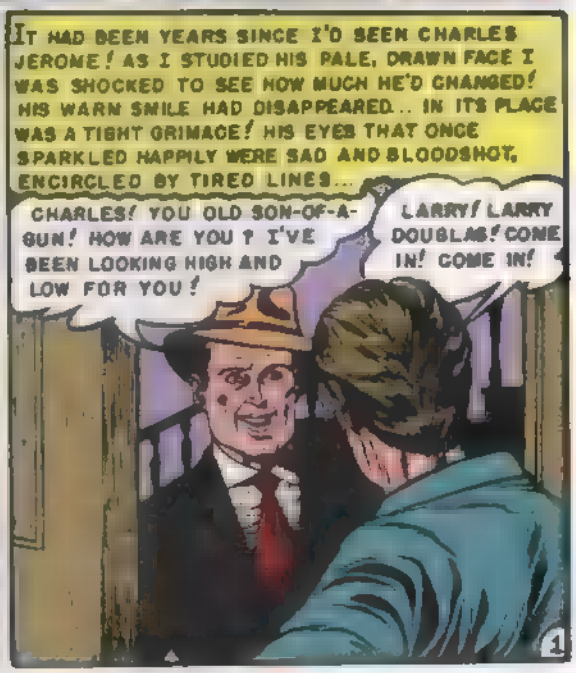
AND SOON, EVEN THOSE CRIES DIED AWAY! AS THE MORNING SUN STREAMED OVER THE GARDEN WALL, A GOLDEN RAY SHOT DOWNWARD TOWARD THE SPOT WHERE ARNOLD EVERETTE ...SEVERAL MONTHS BEFORE... HAD PLANTED CARLO PIETRO'S GNARLED AND CROOKED TREE! THERE, ON A BARE SPOT OF BLACK EARTH, LAY A SINGLE OBJECT AN *ACORN!*

HEH, HEH! WELL, KIDDIES! I HOPE YOU *SEED DA POINT* OF THIS WEIRD LITTLE TALE! WHICH IS *WORSE?* GROWING *OLD* OR GROWING *YOUNG?* *ARNOLD* CAN'T *HELP* YOU! HE'S JUST A *GLEAM*...OF SUNLIGHT...NOW! DON'T FORGET TO READ MY COLUMN, *THE CRYPT-KEEPER'S CORNER*, FOR BACK ISSUES INFO! NOW I'LL TURN YOU OVER TO THAT HAG, *THE OLD WITCH!* 'BYE! DON'T FORGET! OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES ...HEH, HEH!

THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HEE, HEE! YEP, IT'S ME... *THE OLD WITCH*... MISTRESS OF *THE HAUNT OF FEAR!* THIS TIME, FOR THE OFFERING FROM *MY CAULDRON*, I'VE DREDGED UP A TALE TOLD TO ME BY *LARRY DOUGLAS*, A THEATRICAL MAN! IT'S IN HIS *OWN WORDS*, AND HE CALLS IT...

"The Ventriloquist's Dummy!"



CHARLES STEPPED BACK AND I ENTERED HIS HOTEL ROOM! I LOOKED AROUND! THE PLACE WAS BARE EXCEPT FOR AN IRON BED AND A BROKEN CHEST OF DRAWERS! I COULDN'T BELIEVE MY EYES...

HOW DID YOU *FIND* ME, LARRY?

YOUR OLD AGENT TOLD ME WHERE YOU WERE LIVING! I... I DIDN'T *KNOW* THINGS WERE SO *BAD* WITH YOU, CHARLIE!

CHARLES JEROME HAD BEEN A FAMOUS VENTRILOQUIST! TEN YEARS BEFORE, HE'D BEEN A STAR! HIS ACT HAD BEEN FANTASTIC! HIS DUMMY HAD BEEN SO LIFE-LIKE! NO ONE HAD EVER SEEN HIS LIPS MOVE! HE'D BEEN ACCLAIMED BY AUDIENCES WHEREVER HE'D PERFORMED...

I...I'M NOT WORKING ANYMORE, LARRY!

YES! YOUR AGENT TOLD ME! HE SAID YOU'D REFUSED ALL OFFERS! HE SAID YOU'D *RETIRED*...

CHARLES NODDED! I LOOKED AT HIS HAND...HIS LEFT HAND... THE HAND HE'D USED TO MANIPULATE HIS DUMMY...

RETIRED? YES! YOU CAN *CALL* IT THAT!

IF YOU'VE RETIRED, WHY DO YOU STILL KEEP YOUR *HAND GLOVED?*

CHARLIE'D ALWAYS KEPT HIS 'DUMMY-HAND' ENCASED IN A HEAVY WOOLEN MITTEN! I REMEMBERED HOW I'D KIDDED HIM ABOUT IT...

JUST...FORCE OF HABIT I GUESS!

TELL ME, CHARLES, DO YOU STILL HAVE *MORTY*...YOUR *DUMMY?*

CHARLES STARED AT ME FOR A MOMENT! THEN HIS GLANCE SHOT ACROSS THE ROOM TO A BATTERED SUITCASE IN THE CORNER...

OH! YES...I SEE! I THOUGHT SO! HOW IS HE..THE...

DON'T TOUCH THAT SUITCASE!

I STOPPED IN MY TRACKS! CHARLES'S VOICE HAD A WILD FRIGHTENED RING IN IT...

COURSE NOT, CHARLES! IF YOU'D RATHER I WOULDN'T! NOW LET'S GET DOWN TO *BUSINESS!* I'VE COME TO OFFER YOU A *JOB!*

A JOB? BUT...I TOLD YOU! I'M *NOT WORKING* ANYMORE!

LOOK, CHARLES! I'M THE ENTERTAINMENT DIRECTOR FOR A *BIG RESORT HOTEL* IN THE MOUNTAINS! THIS CAN MEAN A *LOT* TO YOU! IT CAN PUT YOU *BACK ON TOP*...IF THEY *LIKE* YOU! WHAT DO YOU SAY? I HAVE A SPOT FOR YOU NEXT WEEKEND!

NO! I WON'T *DO* IT! *I'M THROUGH PERFORMING! THROUGH!*

AS I DROVE BACK UPSTATE, I KEPT THINKING OF CHARLES JEROME! HE'D FALLEN A LONG WAY! I REMEMBERED BACK TO THOSE YEARS WHEN HE'D THRILLED AUDIENCES... HAD THEM ROLLING IN THE AISLES...

YOU WERE *GREAT* TONIGHT CHARLES!

YOU MEAN *MORTY* HERE WAS GREAT, LARRY!

CHARLES'D ALWAYS REFERRED TO MORTY AS THOUGH IT WERE A REAL PERSON! CERTAINLY THE DUMMY BEHAVED THAT WAY! IT WAS THE INCREDIBLE WAY CHARLES USED TO MANIPULATE IT! AND... ALTHOUGH I USED TO THINK IT WAS JUST A PUBLICITY STUNT...CHARLES'D GUARDED THE MANIPULATING HAND WELL...

WHY DO YOU ALWAYS WEAR THAT *HEAVY WOOLEN MITTEN*, CHARLES?

MY *HAND* IS MY FORTUNE! I'VE GOT TO PROTECT IT!

I'D BEEN CHARLES'S AGENT BACK IN THOSE YEARS! WHEN I'D GOTTEN AN OFFER OUT IN HOLLYWOOD, I'D SOLD HIS ACCOUNT! THAT WAS THE LAST I'D SEEN OF HIM, ALTHOUGH I'D FOLLOWED HIS CAREER IN THE TRADE PAPERS...

HMM! WHAT'S THIS? CHARLES JEROME LEAVES SHOW AFTER MYSTERIOUS DEATH OF DANGER ON SAME BILL!

VARI

IT'D BEEN AFTER THAT UNEXPLAINED DEATH THAT CHARLES HAD BEGUN HIS DOWNWARD SLIDE! THE GIRL HAD BEEN ATTACKED, IT SEEMED, BY A HOARD OF *RATS*...

NOTHING ELSE COULD HAVE RIPPED HER UP LIKE THAT EXCEPT SMALL SHARP-TOOTHED ANIMALS, SUCH AS... *RATS*!

I'D HEARD LITTLE ABOUT HIM AFTER THAT! THEN, WHEN I'D TAKEN THE JOB AS ENTERTAINMENT DIRECTOR FOR THE WHITE LAKE HOTEL...

WE WANT TOP-NOTCH, OUT-OF-THE-ORDINARY TALENT, LARRY!

I THINK I KNOW *ONE* ACT YOU'LL LIKE!

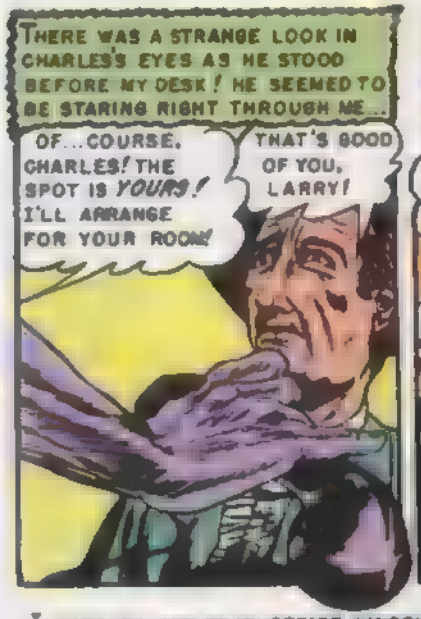
I'D BOOKED THE ACTS I'D NEEDED AND THEN LOOKED UP CHARLES! NOW I WAS DRIVING BACK TO THE HOTEL... THE SPOT STILL OPEN FOR THE NEXT WEEKEND...

MAYBE HE'LL CHANGE HIS MIND! I'LL GIVE HIM A LITTLE TIME TO THINK IT OVER!

I WAS SO BUSY THE NEXT FEW DAYS PLANNING THE MID-WEEK SHOWS THAT I COMPLETELY FORGOT ABOUT CHARLES JEROME! THEN ON FRIDAY MORNING, I LOOKED UP FROM MY DESK TO SEE...

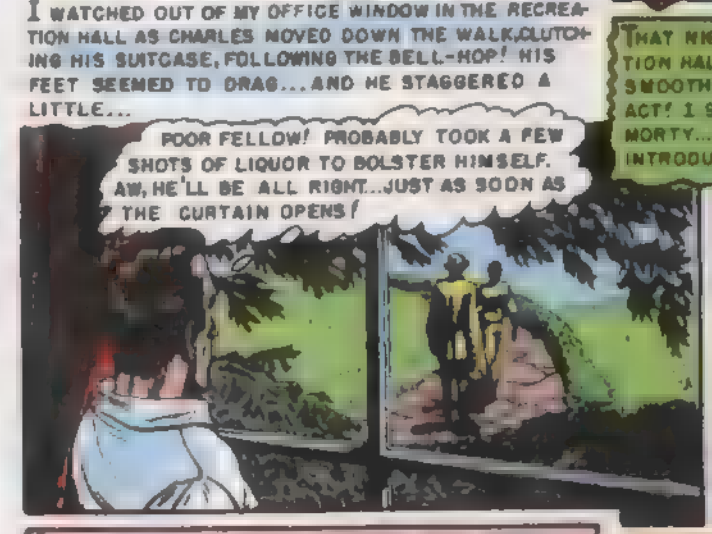
CHARLES! YOU DID COME! I'M SO HAPPY!

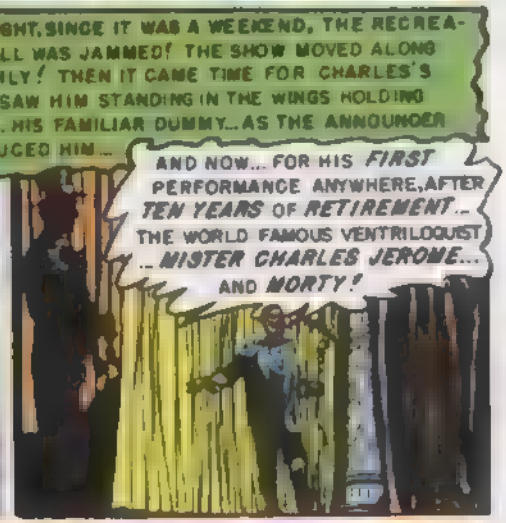
I HOPE THE SPOT IS STILL OPEN, LARRY!

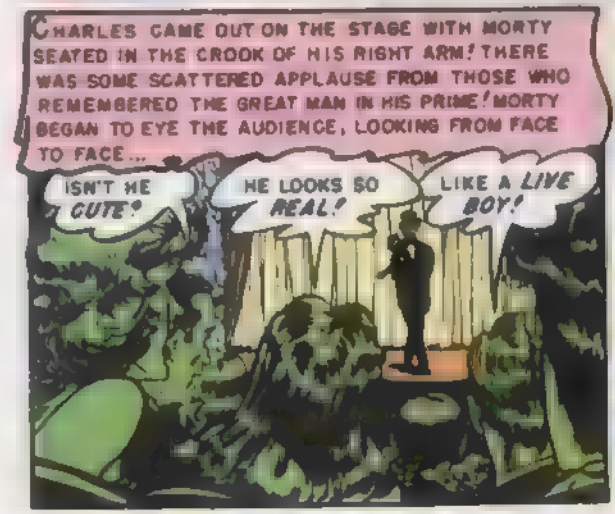

THERE WAS A STRANGE LOOK IN CHARLES'S EYES AS HE STOOD BEFORE MY DESK! HE SEEMED TO BE STARING RIGHT THROUGH ME...
OF...COURSE, CHARLES! THE SPOT IS YOURS! I'LL ARRANGE FOR YOUR ROOM!
THAT'S GOOD OF YOU, LARRY!

CHARLES'S MITTENED HAND HUNG AT HIS SIDE! IN HIS OTHER HAND HE CLUTCHED THE SUITCASE CONTAINING MORTY... HIS DUMMY...
WHAT MADE YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND, CHARLES?
WHY...I JUST DECIDED TO COME OUT OF RETIREMENT... THAT'S ALL!

A BELL-HOP KNOCKED AND ENTERED.
TAKE MR. JEROME TO THE ENTERTAINERS' COTTAGE, JOE! GIVE HIM A NICE ROOM!
YES, SIR! RIGHT THIS WAY, SIR!


I WATCHED OUT OF MY OFFICE WINDOW IN THE RECREATION HALL AS CHARLES MOVED DOWN THE WALK, CLUTCHING HIS SUITCASE, FOLLOWING THE BELL-HOP! HIS FEET SEEMED TO DRAG... AND HE STAGGERED A LITTLE...
POOR FELLOW! PROBABLY TOOK A FEW SHOTS OF LIQUOR TO BOLSTER HIMSELF. AW, HE'LL BE ALL RIGHT...JUST AS SOON AS THE CURTAIN OPENS!


THAT NIGHT, SINCE IT WAS A WEEKEND, THE RECREATION HALL WAS JAMMED! THE SHOW MOVED ALONG SMOOTHLY! THEN IT CAME TIME FOR CHARLES'S ACT! I SAW HIM STANDING IN THE WINGS HOLDING MORTY... HIS FAMILIAR DUMMY...AS THE ANNOUNCER INTRODUCED HIM...
AND NOW... FOR HIS FIRST PERFORMANCE ANYWHERE, AFTER TEN YEARS OF RETIREMENT... THE WORLD FAMOUS VENTRILOQUIST ...MISTER CHARLES JEROME... AND MORTY!


CHARLES CAME OUT ON THE STAGE WITH MORTY SEATED IN THE CROOK OF HIS RIGHT ARM! THERE WAS SOME SCATTERED APPLAUSE FROM THOSE WHO REMEMBERED THE GREAT MAN IN HIS PRIME! MORTY BEGAN TO EYE THE AUDIENCE, LOOKING FROM FACE TO FACE...
ISN'T HE CUTE?
HE LOOKS SO REAL!
LIKE A LIVE BOY!

SUDDENLY MORTY STOPPED! HIS GLANCE HAD FALLEN UPON A RATHER ATTRACTIVE YOUNG WOMAN SEATED NEAR ME! HE WINKED SLYLY...AND QUIPPED...
I'LL SEE YOU TONIGHT, HONEY...AFTER THE SHOW!

IT WAS THE PERFECT THING TO SAY! THE AUDIENCE HOWLED! YOU KNOW THE CROWD THAT FREQUENTS A RESORT LIKE THAT... WOMEN ON VACATIONS LOOKING FOR RICH HUSBANDS.. MEN HUNTING FOR WEALTHY WIVES! IT ALWAYS ENDS UP LIKE A RAT-RACE...WITH EVERYONE LYING TO EVERYONE ELSE! ANYWAY...THEY LOVED CHARLES AND HIS DUMMY...

...SO, MR. JEROME? YOU KNOW A *BETTER* WAY TO STUDY *ASTRONOMY?*

HAW, HAW!

THEY'RE A *SCREAM!*

AFTER THE SHOW, I WENT BACKSTAGE TO CONGRATULATE CHARLES ON HIS WONDERFUL PERFORMANCE! HE'D OUTDONE HIMSELF! HE'D MANIPULATED MORTY BETTER THAN EVER BEFORE...

MR. JEROME? WHY, HE LEFT THE HALL AS SOON AS HE CAME OFF-STAGE!

OH? HE MUST HAVE GONE ON BACK TO THE ENTERTAINERS' COTTAGE!

I MOVED DOWN THE WALK TO THE COTTAGE! BACK AT THE HALL, THE GUESTS WERE POURING OUT OF THE EXITS.. THEIR LAUGHTER DRIFTING ACROSS THE NIGHT AIR TOWARD ME! I COULD HEAR CHARLES'S NAME REFERRED TO IN THE BABBLE OF CONVERSATION...

THEY LIKED HIM!

THE COTTAGE DOOR SLAMMED BEHIND ME AND SILENCE CLOSED IN AS I STOOD IN THE SEMI-DARKNESS! I GAZED DOWN THE CORRIDOR AT THE SIX DOORS...

NOW, WHICH ONE IS CHARLES'S?

SUDDENLY, THE BLOOD FROZE IN MY VEINS! VOICES EXPLODED FROM BEHIND ONE OF THE DOORS...LOUD VOICES HEATED WITH ANGER! CHARLES...USING HIS NORMAL VOICE...WAS ARGUING WITH *HIMSELF*...USING MORTY'S VOICE...

NO! I HEARD! I HEARD! I'M NOT GOING TO LET YOU!

YES YOU WILL! I'LL MAKE YOU! YOU'RE *TOO WEAK TO STOP* ME!

I STOOD OUTSIDE THE DOOR FOR A MOMENT... LISTENING TO THE RAVING...

GOOD LORD! HE'S OUT OF HIS MIND! HE'S FIGHTING WITH THAT DUMMY OF HIS OVER THE GIRL ■ THE AUDIENCE!

I KNOCKED! THE YELLING STOPPED ABRUPTLY! I HEARD A SHORT WHIMPER AND THEN CHARLES OPENED THE DOOR! HIS EYES WERE RED AS THOUGH HE'D BEEN CRYING...

I...I WANTED TO *CONGRATULATE* YOU, CHARLES! THE AUDIENCE *LOVED* YOU!

TH...THANK YOU, LARRY! I...I'M *TIRED!* I MUST GO TO BED NOW... SO I WON'T INVITE YOU IN!

CHARLES CLOSED THE DOOR, AND I STOOD THERE FEELING FOOLISH! I SHRUGGED AND RETURNED TO THE 'REC' HALL! THERE WAS SOME WORK I HAD TO DO BEFORE I COULD GO TO BED! LATER AS I SAT AT MY DESK...
EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEAGHHHHH!
WHAT WAS THAT?
I RUSHED OUTSIDE! IT WAS PITCH BLACK! I RAN DOWN TOWARD THE LAKE IN THE DIRECTION OF THE SCREAM! I TRIPPED OVER SOMETHING SOFT LYING IN MY PATH AND WENT SPRAWLING! WHEN I LIT A MATCH...
OH, MY GOD! A WOMAN! SHE'S DEAD! RIPPED TO PIECES... AS IF SHE'D BEEN ATTACKED BY SMALL SHARP-TOOTHED ANIMALS! BY... RATS!
GOOD LORD!
IT WAS THE SAME WOMAN THAT CHARLES'D HAD MORTY QUIP TO! I THOUGHT OF THE DANCER THAT HAD DIED THE SAME WAY TEN YEARS BEFORE! I RUSHED TO THE COTTAGE AND FLUNG OPEN CHARLES'S DOOR...
CHARLES! HE... HE'S GONE!
THE SUITCASE CONTAINING CHARLES'S DUMMY SAT ON THE FLOOR IN THE CORNER! I MOVED TOWARD IT! I HAD TO SEE! I THREW BACK THE LID...
WHAT THE...? THE DUMMY HAS NO HEAD!
I STARED DOWN AT THE HEADLESS VENTRILOQUIST'S DUMMY! I COULDN'T UNDERSTAND IT! THEN I SAW OTHER THINGS IN THE SUITCASE...
MAKE-UP! THE SUITCASE HAS MAKE-UP IN IT!
A SHOUT FROM THE HOTEL KITCHEN DREW MY ATTENTION! I RUSHED ACROSS THE GRASS AND ONTO THE PORCH! THE CHEF STOOD WIDE-EYED... WAVING HIS ARMS...
WHAT HAPPENED?
HE TAKE MY CLEAVER! HE STEAL MY CLEAVER! THAT VENTRILOQUIST!
I LOOKED AROUND! A MITTEN LAY ON THE FLOOR AT MY FEET! I PICKED IT UP! IT WAS COVERED WITH BLOOD! SUDDENLY I HEARD CHARLES'S VOICE COMING FROM BEHIND SOME BUSHES...
CHARLES!
I'M GOING TO GET RID OF YOU... ONCE AND FOR ALL... YOU... HIDEOUS FIEND! YOU LITTLE BEAST!

AS I RUSHED TOWARD THE BUSHES, I HEARD MORTY'S VOICE...SHOUTING, SCREAMING! THEN A CRAWLING SENSATION STARTED UP MY SPINE! THE VOICES OVERLAPPED! THERE WERE TWO VOICES...
NO! DON'T, CHARLES! DON'T!
IT'S NO USE! I'M FREEING MYSELF...FOR GOOD!
AS I SWUNG AROUND THE BUSH, I CAUGHT SIGHT OF A GLEAM OF STEEL IN THE BLACKNESS! CHARLES STOOD OVER A TREE STUMP... HIS LEFT FOREARM PRESSED ON ITS FLAT TOP! AND HE WAS BRINGING THE CLEAVER DOWN UPON IT...
NO! NO! EEEEEEEE!
MORTY'S SCREAM WAS CUT SHORT AS THE CLEAVER FELL! A NAUSEATING FANGED HEAD... SHRIVELED AND UGLY... ROLLED TO MY FEET...
I'M RID OF YOU! RID OF YOU!
OH, MY GOD!
CHARLES PITCHED FORWARD AND FELL! HIS LEFT HAND HAD BEEN SEVERED AT THE WRIST! NOW I KNEW WHY HE'D ALWAYS WORN THE MITTEN! INSTEAD OF A LEFT HAND, A HIDEOUS HEAD HAD GROWN FROM HIS WRIST...
I...I HAD TO DO IT, LARRY! TEN YEARS AGO HE KILLED THAT DANCER! HE TOOK OVER MY BODY AND KILLED HER!
YOU'RE BLEEDING, CHARLES! I'VE GOT TO GET YOU A DOCTOR!
WHEN I WAS A CHILD, THEY SAID I HAD A DEFORMED HAND! BUT AS I GREW UP, THAT HORRIBLE HEAD DEVELOPED! SOON IT OPENED ITS WICKED EYES AND BEGAN TO TALK! I BECAME A VENTRILOQUIST... USED IT AS A DUMMY!
THAT EXPLAINS THE REALISTIC MOVEMENTS MORTY ALWAYS HAD!
THEN IT BEGAN TO WREST CONTROL OF MY BODY WHILE I SLEPT! I HAD TO RETIRE FROM SHOW BUSINESS! I KEPT THE HEAD DRUGGED! BUT YOU... YOU CAME... AND OFFERED ME WORK! TONIGHT, IT TOOK OVER AGAIN! I COULDN'T STOP IT! I...I...
I'LL GO FOR THE DOCTOR, CHARLES! I'LL BE RIGHT BACK!
I TIED A CRUDE TOURNIQUET ON CHARLES'S WRIST AND RUSHED OFF! WHEN I GOT BACK, CHARLES WAS DEAD! HE'D BEEN TORN TO SHREDS! THE SEVERED 'HEAD' LAY NEARBY...
THE HEAD WASN'T QUITE DEAD! WITH ITS LAST THREAD OF LIFE, IT ATTACKED CHARLES! THEY'VE DESTROYED EACH OTHER!
HEE, HEE! WELL, THAT'S THE YARN LARRY PALMED OFF ON ME! SO I JUST HANDED IT DOWN TO YOU! I HOPE YOU LIKED IT! NEXT TIME YOU SEE A VENTRILOQUIST, LOOK CAREFULLY TO SEE HOW HE HOLDS HIS DUMMY! IF HE'S REACHING IN TOO FAR... BEWARE! WELL, WE'LL ALL SEE YOU NEXT IN THE VAULT OF HORROR! DON'T FORGET TO READ THE CRYPT KEEPER'S CORNER FOR BACK ISSUE 'N' SUBSCRIPTION INFO! 'BYE, NOW!

SUBSCRIBE!

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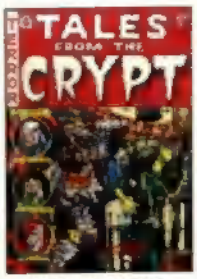

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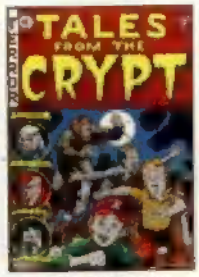

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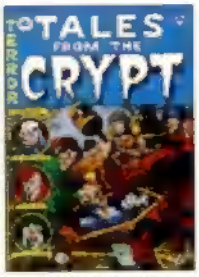

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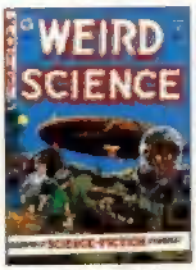

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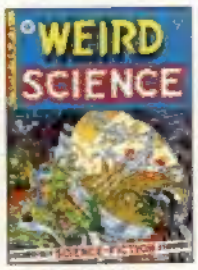

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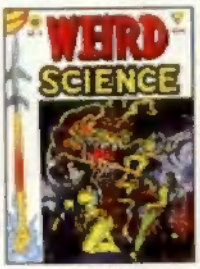

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